The Culture of Adoption in the United States as Compared to France and Belgium

A Senior Honors Thesis

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by

Meredith Lammers

The Ohio State University
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Project Advisors: Professor Danielle Marx-Scouras, Department of French and Italian
Professor Carla M. Curtis, College of Social Work

Abstract

This thesis is a study of how adoption functions as an institution and is perceived publicly in three countries. Interest in the adoption system in the United States was one major factor that motivated this research thesis. There are an estimated 500,000 children in the out of home care system in the United States and a significant number of these children are legally free for adoption. Yet most of these children are not adopted in any given year. Additionally, Americans adopt a high number of children internationally despite an adequate amount of American children available for adoption. The motivation to adopt has been altered by changing family demographics. Gay and lesbian couples, single parents, and older couples are more likely to adopt. These aspects of adoption inspired my interest in how other countries view adoption and whether they experience similar problems.

A second major factor which influenced this research is my interest in international relations and diplomacy and French. Comparing the culture of adoption in the United States to the culture of adoption in France and Belgium has been of interest to me for a number of years. The culture of transparency in government and privacy in the home has a major effect on attitudes towards adoption in France and Belgium. I anticipated adoption would be widely discussed, encouraged, and treated as a government institution in those countries. Instead adoption is perceived as an incredibly private matter in France and Belgium, and there is a more widely accepted culture of adoption in the United States when compared to those countries.

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Introduction

For four years I have intended to write an honors thesis to complete my honors contract. The subject matter had to be connected with my two majors, which are International Relations and Diplomacy and French. As a sophomore I was introduced to the subject of adoption through a research paper. This piqued my interest in adoption and inspired me to expand the research paper into an honors thesis.

Adoption as a subject interested me because I was fascinated that people would welcome others' children into their homes and raise them as their own children. After researching adoption in the United States I found that there was an incredibly high number of children that needed to be adopted, a higher number of children in the out of home care system, and a long ordeal required for prospective parents to become adoptive parents. I wanted to research whether other countries had cultures that were more supportive of adoption, if their processes were more streamlined, if they adopted a higher number of children, and if they had fewer children in need of permanent homes.

The original proposal involved a somewhat simplistic goal, which was to study the culture of adoption in France and Belgium as compared to the United States (U.S.) since 1950. The objective was to learn about what differences exist and why. I intended to do this by visiting agencies in France and Belgium and interviewing both workers and prospective parents regarding their thoughts and feelings about the adoptive process. Literature from those countries would also provide an invaluable view into public opinion, and I planned to study pamphlets and books during the trip.

Since the original proposal was written the goal of this research has become more analytical and descriptive. The revised research focus is qualitative and aims to identify those

factors which contribute to the success of the out of home care systems in France and Belgium.

Western Europe has a markedly different system of adoption than the U.S. because of several factors. Nonetheless, all three countries have common elements such as an aging population, a recent influx of immigrants and public attention to immigration, and changing attitudes towards families. Based on these similarities, I wanted to research what commonalities exist between the adoption systems in these countries.

In order to best understand the cultures of adoption in France and Belgium it is necessary to set them within a social and historical context.

Social and Historical Context of France

Today France is one of the leaders of Europe as part of the Great 8 (un.org), as well as a leader in the European Union (CIA World Factbook, 2008). Its history is widely known and popularized through books such as *Les Miserables* by Victor Hugo and movies like *Marie Antoinette* directed by Sofia Coppola. It produced many of the artistic leaders during the Renaissance period in Europe. France was one of the first countries to grant freedom of worship (Embassy of France, 2008). The most important part of French history as pertains to this thesis begins in the 1850s, when immigration and racism first became an important political issue.

After industrialization, France became such a major immigration center that "…today between a third and a fifth of all French citizens are thought to be of foreign origin." (Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003). France's colonial history has influenced political thought deeply as well. For example, French children are taught about the magnificence and prosperity of the countries that were part of the French empire, and how those countries improved after being acquisitioned by France. However, these lessons have instilled prejudices against citizens of previous colonies (Kedward, 2006).

During the twentieth century, France was influenced by wars on an enormous scale. There were the World Wars, the wars in Korea and Vietnam, wars of independence, and civil wars in previous colonies. This resulted in waves of immigrants from Europe, then North Africa, then Asia, and more recently from the Near East. As a result many immigrants were victims of persecution and discrimination (Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003).

France arrived in the twenty first century with a unique set of political and cultural norms. Jules Michelet, a French historian, has summarized France's national identity thus: "England is an empire, Germany is a nation, a race, France is a person" (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2008). And just like any person, France's popular opinions tend to be somewhat fickle and unpredictable, which is compounded by the current multi-party political system (Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003). Whereas in the United States we only have two political parties that tend to take stances that are the polar opposite of the other party's, in France there is more than a dichotomous structure where multiple parties can support the same idea through different implementations (Kedward, 2006).

Immigration in France is as important a political problem as it is here, and for many of the same reasons. Since international adoption is a type of immigration, such an interest will have an effect on adoptees' integration into French society. Immigration is especially disturbing to the French because of a declining birth rate among the native born French populations. This means that a significant proportion of the recent population increase is due to immigration (unfpa.org). Immigration to France has been increasing since 1997, mostly from non-European countries (Thierry and Rogers, 2002). During the last three decades immigration has taken several distinct turns. In 1974, France closed its borders to immigration, partly as a result of the economic crisis of 1973, but reopened its borders in the early 1980s. The 1980s was the decade

in which the first headscarf issue arose (over whether or not religious symbols such as headscarves should be allowed in public schools) as well as the entrance of second-generation immigrants and their particular problems onto the political stage. Since the 1990s there has been a large component of French society that is against immigration because of immigrants from Islamic countries (Fernando, 2004). The government's current stance on immigration is to integrate immigrants into society by providing education in French civics and language, but it is a constantly evolving issue (Embassy of France, 2008).

Racism, especially as a result of immigration, is also an extremely important issue in French society. "Racism is targeted in particular against peoples whose presence evokes a conflict-ridden colonial past: immigrants from the Maghreb are the main targets of hostility" (Peignard, 2001). Riots in the autumn and winter of 2005 were perpetrated by second-generation immigrants as a response to the unwarranted death of two teens who were killed by excessive police violence (Burns and Mongodin, 2005). The headscarf issues have also played large roles in the development of racism in France; politically the argument is over the constitutionality of wearing symbols of religion in public schools, but most believe the argument is over the advance of Islam into French culture (Fernando, 2004). This can be ascertained by noting that, although necklaces with crosses or similar items were banned along with headscarves, they were an afterthought and were not part of the argument. As in any country with a long Christian past many people are wont to display symbols of Christianity either privately or publicly. These symbols, though, were not deemed to be dangerous or offensive in the way that headscarves were. Probably the best way to look at the issue of racism in France is to make an analogy between the Hispanic (especially Mexican) population in the United States and the Maghreb population in France. Just as in the U.S., one must also consider politics when discussing racism

and immigration in France. The *Front National*, a far right political party, reintroduced their beliefs into political thought in 2002. Moderate and leftist parties have lost their credibility, and it is increasingly the right wing *Front National* that is gaining political power and having a stronger presence in the government. This will have significant implications for immigrants, ethnicities other than white, and religions other than Christianity because of the far right's strong pro-France stance (Fysh and Wolfreys, 2003).

Social and Historical Context of Belgium

"Belgium is a marvelous accident of history" (de Heusch, 2002). It is a country about the size of Maryland that lies to the Northeast of France bordering France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg (CIA World Factbook, 2008). It is linguistically and culturally divided between two regions: the north, wherein live the Flemings who speak a variation of Dutch and Flemish, and the south, which is inhabited by the Walloons who speak French (van Geyt, Rousseau, and Smets, 1946). Belgium achieved its independence in 1830 from the Netherlands, and previous to that acted as a trade and production center for those countries lucky enough to govern it (Boulger, 1902). The linguistic barrier that has been part of Belgium for centuries began as a result of the French occupation of Belgium in the 13th century. The French aristocracy suppressed Flemish, the native language of the northern provinces, and instituted French as the only possible language in schools and government, requiring the previously bilingual Flemings to become francophones. However, the Flemings cultivated such a hatred of the French that the exact opposite happened; French became obsolete in the region, with the exception of Brussels (Cook, 2002). The importance of language was underscored in the 14th century when Flemish speaking peasants from Flanders were trying to oust the French and ended

by killing anyone who could not properly pronounce *Schild en Vriend* (Shield and Friend) (de Heusch, 2002).

The linguistic division in Belgium presents one of the biggest political problems because it is the face of deeper cultural conflicts that are threatening to tear Belgium apart (Cook, 2002). When Belgium was first formed, French was the official language for several reasons. First, it was selected partly out of respect for France's assistance in Belgium's independence. Second, popular movements at the time (Lyon, 1971), especially involving preferences for religion (which the regions held in common) as opposed to language (which they did not) (Beaufays, 1988), supported French as the language of the Church. Third, suffrage was at that point only extended to wealthy aristocrats, most of whom already spoke French to distinguish themselves further from the peasantry (Lyon, 1972). When the constitution was revised in 1893 it included provisions for Flemish speakers, and the linguistic divide was finally recognized politically (van Geyt, Rousseau, and Smets, 1946). There was a period of cultural and linguistic calm during the first half of the twentieth century as Belgium was pre-occupied with far more pressing concerns, such as the World Wars and economic problems (Heisler, 1977). However, in 1963 the language problem became a political issue when a law was passed that created an officially trilingual Belgium, with German as a third language out of respect to the small German minority (Facts on File, fofweb.com, 2008). In the 1970s and 1980s there was a movement towards Flemish nationalism that has deepened the conflict between the two cultures. This movement was created by an economic reversal between Flanders, which had previously been agricultural and less developed (with the exception of Brussels), and Wallonia, which had been the industrial center, as well as an increase of regionalist pride in Flanders (Beaufays, 1988). Eventually, the constitution was changed in 1993 to recognize the two communities, which changed Belgium

from a unitary state to a federal state (CIA World Factbook, 2008). Today, Belgium is still torn between the two languages, along with the German-speaking minority, and threatens to split in two (Cook, 2002). The language division prevented me from doing a full study of Belgium as I was limited to the francophone community.

Since World War II Belgium, like the rest of Western Europe, has seen a steady influx of immigration, which brings two main issues to light: immigration and racism (Freeman, 1995). Also like most of Western Europe, Belgium has witnessed "harsh, and often violent, reactions to these new minorities" (Pettigrew, 1998). The important issue with immigration during the two decades after World War II was that the immigrants who entered Belgium were not the Europeans that Belgium had anticipated. There were Italians, who were quickly integrated, and North Africans, who were not (Pettigrew, 1998). The migration of Europeans was replaced by immigration from countries in Africa - a "largely unintended aftereffect of colonialism" (Freeman, 1995). Nevertheless, Africans were allowed to come into the country, where they were welcomed by the political parties, if by few else, for their numbers (Cook, 2002). During the 1970s the influx slowed due to economic crises and a popular outcry against immigrants that is a common effect of economic troubles. The 1980s realized an improvement in economic standards along with the growth of the new minorities by continued immigration, high birth rates, and low death rates among first generation immigrants, particularly from non-European origins (Pettigrew, 1998). Belgium had signed the Schengen Agreement in 1989, which was created to help European remove obstacles to immigration and improve the freedom of movement of people within Europe. It was an attempt by Belgium to combat the influx of new minorities by encouraging more "acceptable" immigration (Bhavnani, 1993). Because of a strongly racist public opinion, the Belgium government spent the better part of the 1990s

enacting anti-racist programs and enforcing a 1981 law combating racism (Stengers, 2000). In 2007, the Centre for Equal Opportunities in Belgium began a grassroots campaign to combat racism and make the Centre more accessible to victims. The Centre reports receiving "a bit less than 1000 complaints" a year, of which only four percent need to be handled legally.

Background

Early History of Adoption

The United States, France, and Belgium share a history of adoption up through the end of Roman civilization. Biblically, there is the precedent of Moses' adoption (Ex 2:10), as well as statements about God adopting new believers as His own children and their having equal rights to His inheritance as His own children (Rom 8:14-17 and Gal 4:5-7). Jesus is not the son of Joseph, but was raised by him, and his genealogy, at least according to Matthew, includes four irregular sexual unions that would have involved adoption of the children to maintain inheritance and family lines (Jackson, 2005). Along with Judaism and Christianity, Islam had its own rules for adoption. Adoption was allowed, as well as respected as a way of following the commands of Allah, but the child's ties with their birth families were to remain intact. The Qu'ran recommends calling the child by their father's name, as would be done with a biological child. If the father's name is not known, the children should be called "your brothers in faith" in lieu of giving the child the adopted father's name (Qu'ran 33:4-5).

There is also the legal precedent of the Hammurabi Code from 1700 B.C. that was based in the earlier Sumerian and Akkadian traditions (Babb, 1999). The Hammurabi Code in its section on adoption focused on severing old family ties so that the new family could create a relationship as strong as blood because of the heavy importance of blood ties. Later, the Romans created adoption laws. Their laws, like the Hammurabi Code, were focused on inheritance, family blood ties, and the perpetuation of the family, not on the welfare of the child (Halifax & Villeneuve-Gokalp, 2004). There were two types of laws concerning adoption in ancient Rome, *patria potestas* and *arrogation*, but both only allowed for the adoption of adults who were twenty-five or older. *Patria potestas* governed the adoption of those who had families, which

was the socially preferred method of adoption. *Arrogation* governed adoption of adults without families, which was frowned upon socially and legally (Babb, 1999). There were other laws that governed adoption throughout the rest of the world, particularly India and China, but they neither influenced nor were influenced by this history of adoption that led to European and then American adoption systems[1] (Javier et al, 2007).

Adoption in France and Belgium

After the Romans left Europe, adoption became an unimportant aspect of life. The Church dictated that one could pass their possessions on to whomever they chose, whether or not they were related, which made adoption to establish an heir pointless (Maury, 1999). During the 1500s and 1600s there was a law in France requiring nobles to adopt orphaned children found on their lands, but the law was mostly ignored (Babb, 1999). Finally, towards the end of the eighteenth century governments again addressed the subject of adoption. Perhaps this was because of the high numbers of children who were abandoned. In some cities in France the rates of abandonment was recorded at twenty to thirty percent of live births. This number does not account for unrecorded abandonments (Boswell, 1988). Whatever the reason, the law of 1793 was a particularly progressive law that gave adopted children equal rights with biological children in matters of inheritance. It was likely the radical nature of the law that contributed to its own demise, as it was replaced by the Code Napoléon (O.K.M., 1913). The Code, which was equally applicable in Belgium, did not permit the adoption of minors. Instead, it created an "officious tutorship" which would allow a man to apprentice or raise a child and adopt them upon their entry into adulthood (Brosnan, 1922). Over the next hundred and fifty years the law

[1] There is a history of adoption in Oceania and the Arctic, with both the indigenous Hawaiians and Inuit practicing adoption, but their methods were introduced into mainstream American legal practice too late for them to have any real effect on American adoption as it is today (Terrell and Modell, 1994).

was revised to lower the age of adoption for both the prospective parent and child, but the essence of adoption remained the same – to provide an heir (Maury, 1999). Adoption gained importance during this time because of the plethora of orphans, especially after the World Wars (Rejou, 2003).

In 1923 the age limits changed so that it was legal to adopt a minor unrelated to the prospective parent in France, but there was another period of sixteen years until those adopted children were viewed as the legal equals of their biological counterparts (Halifax & Villeneuve-Gokalp, 2005). Adoption in Belgium, like in France, has remained closed (Code Civil de la Belgique, 2005). During the second half of the twentieth century, adoption evolved into its current state, most notably through the introduction of international adoption. The first international adoption involved two unrelated Vietnamese children who were placed with different families in 1967. It was the beginning of a long-lived movement to save the children of Vietnam[2]. Two years later, in 1969, the first children were adopted from Korea (Maury, 1995). Very quickly international adoption became integral to the institution of adoption in France and Belgium because available native children were becoming increasingly rare. France, for example, has seen its population of adoptable children decrease by 63 percent over the past fifteen years while at the same time seeing an increase by 65 percent of prospective parents (Halifax & Villeneuve-Gokalp, 2005).

By 1993 adoption had become popular as an alternative method to create a family. International adoption had become prevalent in not only France and Belgium, but throughout all of Europe, and as a result the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption was held. The purpose was to protect members of the triad, and it was signed by countries which were both

[2] A copy of the front page of Le Monde from this day can be found in Appendix A.

common places from which children were adopted and the countries that adopted the most children. Over the last fifteen years almost seventy countries have implemented the Convention into their governments (Hague Conference on Private International Law, 2005). France ratified the Convention in 1998 and Belgium followed in 2005, both after revising their relative adoption laws (Hague Conference on Private International Law, 2005). The Convention has revolutionized the way that international adoption is enacted and is helping to reduce corruption in countries where child trafficking used to be rampant.

Today adoption serves three purposes in Western Europe. First, it provides homes to abandoned and orphaned children as well as those whose parents could not care for them. Second, it provides childless with a family. Third, adoption creates an heir for an individual or couple without one, although this last purpose is more a special circumstance than a purpose in its own right (Goody, 1969). It has become a completely acceptable way to create a family for singles and couples of every genre (Rejou, 2003).

Adoption in the United States

Each day in the United States 2,383 children are confirmed as abused or neglected (childrensdefense.org). Adoption, foster care, and out of home care all work to provide children with a loving, nurturing, supporting, and healing family. However, these services are underfunded, misunderstood, and disorganized (Javier, Baden, Biafora, Camacho-Gingerich, 2007). The laws that sustain these institutions are cursory and contradictory (Strickland, 2003). They are stretched to the limit in an attempt to care for children in need. As of September 30, 2005, there were more than 500,000 children in foster care (AFCARS Report 13, 2006). Although this number has been declining steadily for the last ten years (AFCARS Report 12,

2002), it is still too high to be morally acceptable to most Americans (Pertman, 2000), myself included.

When the first colonists arrived, they quickly established laws concerning adoption. Native Americans had a practice of informal adoption, which emphasized breaking biological ties with the original families, and was considered legal and acceptable even if the child had been kidnapped. It has been written that Christopher Columbus captured and later adopted an island boy (Babb, 1999). Among the colonists there was a practice of apprenticing unwanted and orphaned children to tradesman who needed cheap labor (Carp, 2002). The only method of legal adoption at that point was to convince the colonial and later the state government to pass a piece of legislation to change the child's last name (Babb, 1999). However, as much as adoption was kept secret, there are still famous adoptees from that time period, such as John Hancock (Javier et al, 2007). This state of affairs did not last long, and by 1800 the public had become disenchanted with this mixture of adoption and indentured servitude (Esposito and Biafora, 2007).

During the first half of the nineteenth century the basic framework for adoptions was laid which would last until the early 1900s. Asylums were built, and they catered to a crowd of lower class unwed mothers and children. Their main goal was reunification with extended families or placement in a middle class family (Esposito and Biafora, 2007). Placement with upper class families was avoided because children adopted into such families were most often treated as servants (Carp, 2002). During this period the "best interests of the child" standard was codified. This standard set court precedent in adoption cases by favoring four popular thoughts concerning adoption. First, the youngest children should be in the care of a woman. Second, older boys should be in the care of a father, their own if possible. Third, when placement decisions were

being made consideration was given to a child's attachment factors. Fourth, if the child was of a reasonable age, then they were allowed to voice their opinion about their placement (Carp, 2002). This "best interest" standard is seen as uniquely American, and is still upheld to a great degree today (Silva-Ruiz, 1990).

In 1846 and 1851 Mississippi and Texas respectively passed adoption statutes that were based on the Napoleonic Code (Carp, 2002). They were followed by Alabama and Vermont (Guthrie and Grossman, 1999). But the first law governing adoption by a non-relative was not enacted until 1851 in Massachusetts, the same state that had been the location of the first legal adoption by Sir William Phips during colonial times (Babb, 1999). Important in this 1851 law was the emphasis on the interests of the child as opposed to the family (Hoksbergen, 1986). It also left the birth record open so that members of the adoption triad (birth parents, adoptive parents, and adoptee) and the general public, could obtain that information (Carp, 2004). Slowly, other states began enacting adoption laws, and establishing judicial and social reviews of the adopted child's placement to protect against abuse and negligence by adoptive parents (Infausto, 1969). Within twenty-five years, twenty-five states had adoption laws or statutes (Guthrie and Grossman, 1999).

The opinions of that time favored placing unwanted children into rural homes in the West as opposed to the cities and slums of the East (Babb, 1999). Felix Infausto paints a picture of the "orphan train" phenomenon:

> Imagine a caravan of children being led from New York City … to a western town. Prior to the trek, a western town had been chosen, and advertisements and posters had been arranged to announce the coming of the children. Upon their arrival the children were greeted by townspeople anxious to insure a full harvest.

> The children were displayed on stage, and the local citizenry could then take their pick… All too infrequently, an "adoption" thus arranged would provide a fruitful home for the child and foster parents. (page 2, Infausto, 1969)

This scenario played out in thousands of towns across the west, resulting in apprenticeship or adoption, indentured servitude, or abandonment (Babb, 1999). There is some disagreement, but the number of children who were placed on these trains, which were created and implemented by Charles Loring Brace, was most likely as high as 100,000 or more (Pertman, 2000). The trains were sent to Ohio, Kansas, Nebraska, Illinois, Indiana, Oklahoma, and Texas, and other states where there was a need for farm labor (Carp, 2002). In the south an "informal transfer" of dependent children was used to supply farm labor (Pertman, 2000).

By 1900 no legislation required research into or evaluation of prospective homes or parents who wished to adopt children (Herman, 2002). Social services in the first three decades of the twentieth century were more concerned with making sure unwed mothers kept and raised their children than with adoption (Freundlich, 2000). During this time the "Baby Black Market" took off. By 1926 there were reports of baby farms, and "houses of upstanding moral character" that took in unwed mothers for a fee, and sold their babies (Aigner, 1986). Orphanages and infant asylums were home to more than 2,000 children during this era (Wheal, 1999). Though the treatment of children during this time was reprehensible, it was a time of rapid cultural, economic, and political change. Children were some of the victims of this change. Factors such as industrialization, immigration, World War I, and increasing poverty contributed to the harsh climate within which children were being raised and cared for in the out of home care system (Esposito and Biafora, 2007).

Adoption and child welfare secured more support and advocacy, resulting in more laws and aimed at protecting children and promoting adoptions. Between 1937 and 1945, adoptions increased threefold despite the implementation of new guidelines and practices (Carp, 2002). The amount of out-of-wedlock births increased too at this time, with 87,000 in 1938, 150,000 in 1952, and 250,000 in 1965 (Isaac, 1965). The women who gave birth to these children were encouraged or coerced to relinquish their children, because unwed parents were thought o be unfit parents (Esposito and Biafora, 2007). Between the 1930s and the 1960s there was a movement to seal adoption records from members of the triad and issue new birth certificates (Carp, 2004). Also, international adoption began to enter the adoption scene. As global awareness grew new legislation was passed and international adoption first became legal in 1955 (Babb, 1999).

Tobias Hubinette (2006) argues that there were no interracial much less international adoptions before the 1950s, and the reason why Whites became so amenable to the idea of adopting children from other parts of the world was because of the Holocaust, World War II, decolonization, and, especially, a lack of available American children. The first international adoptions, inspired by the population of orphans of World War II, involved Japanese children (Esposito and Biafora, 2007). Soon after, during the early 1960s, the number of adoptable children was larger than the number of prospective parents for the first time (Wheal, 1999). It was also during this time that adoption of Black children by White parents increased as a response to low birth rates among white women (Silverman, 1993).

In the following decades international adoptions and transracial adoptions became more common (Babb, 1999). Adoption was still frowned upon by many. The stigma associated with relinquishing a child for adoption, infertility, and racial and international issues made it a

difficult subject for many (Freundlich, 2001). Of concern was whether one ethnic group of people can or should attempt to raise another ethnic groups' children – a question that is still debated today (Jackson, 2005). There was also the ongoing problem of the "Baby Market" which flourished not only in the United States, where it is believed to have generated between $50 and $100 million dollars annually, but also in Latin America, where it was also in the multi-million dollar range (Aigner, 1965). There are three paths of illegal adoption. One can obtain children illegally and place them for adoption. Or, one can secure permission illegally to place children for adoption, or to not secure it at all. Alternately, it is possible to avoid the adoption process entirely by taking a child through a third country (Freundlich, 2000), which is only functional with international adoptions. It is this kind of problem that makes some people wary of adopting (Spivack, 2006).

With the advent of "politics of the individual", civil rights movements, and liberalization of social norms, the U.S. came not only to view adoption differently but to view "illegitimacy" differently as well (Pertman, 2000). As more women began to keep their children born out wedlock, the number of available children decreased, but the number of children in foster care remained high (Esposito and Biafora, 2007; Freundlich, 2000). For those that were adopted, the 1970s was an era of openness where the public grew to disapprove of sealing adoption records (Williams, 2006). International adoption also became increasingly significant in the 1990s and is playing a larger role today than in the past (Freundlich, 2001).

Adoption in the U.S. today is an innate part of society. Between two and four percent of American families are formed by adoption (US Census, 2004). Some experts believe that as many as six in ten Americans are directly affected by adoption through their immediate and/or extended families or through their friends (Carp, 2002). In total, there are anywhere between

100,000 and 150,000 adoptions each year in the U.S. (Freundlich, 2001; Biafora and Esposito, 2007; U.S. Department of State, 2008; AFCARS Report 13, 2007). As of 2001, 39 percent of these were public adoptions, or adoptions from foster care to a non-relative, 46 percent were private adoptions, or adoptions within a family such as step-child adoption, tribal adoption, or adoption by relatives, and 15 percent were intercountry adoptions (Biafora and Esposito, 2007). The children who are adopted both domestically and internationally typically come from impoverished households (Freundlich, 2001). Of the estimated 500,000 children in foster care, at least a quarter are available for adoption any given year (AFCARS Report 13, 2006). Steps have been taken to improve the quality of life and chances for permanency among children in foster care. Since the 1980s critical statutes have been passed in Congress including the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act from 1980 followed by the Multiethnic Placement Act in 1993 and Adoption and Safe Families Act in 1997 (Allen and Bissell, 2003). There is clearly more to be achieved when the number of children in foster care remains as high as it currently is. In conclusion, adoption in the United States, while having already advanced a great distance, still leaves more to be desired.

Professional and Personal Interviews[3]

Interviews in Belgium

Sophie[4]

The research in Belgium began with a visit to Sophie, the director of *l'Autorité Centrale Fédérale, Service de l'Adoption Internationale* (Central Federal Authority, International Adoption Service - IAS). Belgian adoption laws changed in 2005 to accommodate the enactment of the Hague Convention in Belgium. One such change was the establishment of a federal agency to oversee all international adoptions, which was realized in the IAS. She has a unique opinion on adoption because she only works with parents whose dossiers are already completed and are waiting for judgment and finalization. The IAS is the last step that prospective parents must complete before meeting their child. Sophie's work is therefore composed of administrative tasks and meetings with parents, for which she is required to have a law degree and two years of experience as a counselor.

Sophie became interested in adoption as a result of studies in psychology and law and began to work with the IAS in 2005 (two years before this interview was conducted), and yet she is the director. She remarked that she receives forty to fifty dossiers a month from Belgian parents preparing to adopt internationally. The federal agency works with all three *communautés*, as well as with citizens from all regions. According to her there is an ongoing disagreement over jurisdiction during different parts of the adoption process.

The prospective parents Sophie meets have personalities that follow a specific pattern. She says that they are mean, selfish, and tend to believe that rich countries should adopt from

[3] For a copy of the questionnaires used in these interviews please look in Appendix B.
[4] Names have been changed to protect anonymity

poor countries. The reasons for this mindset vary from guilt in having more money to the presupposition that developing countries are incapable of raising their children. They are of the persuasion that the child they are adopting will have an infinitely better life with them.

Sophie lives in a diverse milieu of family, friends, and neighbors that is open to new cultures. She maintains that the city of Brussels is very diverse, and Belgium, if not diverse, is at least open to new cultures. Belgian society is equally amenable to adoptive and biological families; she does not observe any discrimination against adoptive families. In Belgium, public opinion of adoption is affected by the politics of immigration, infertility, low birth rates, and immigrations. All of these factors add up to create a favorable climate for international adoption at the present time.

Despite working with adoption, Sophie has not adopted any children herself, but does have two biological children. However, she has recommended it to a close friend and she believes that each individual's privacy should be respected and the recommendations to families need not be invasive and can be done respectfully.

Mireille

Sophie then introduced me to a coworker, Mireille, who is an employee of the court system in Belgium who works in tangent with the IAS. Her perception of adoption is interesting because she only spends ten to fifteen hours a month in court judging the finalization of adoptions. She has been doing this work for four years, and has been worked directly with the IAS since its inception in 2005. Like Sophie, she has little direct contact with the adoptive parents. With the exception of one meeting in court, all correspondence between her and the adoptive parents is conducted through a courier. Contact with other workers in the adoption

process is minimal, but she feels as though her positive reflection on the adoption process is due to her colleague's positive attitudes.

Adoption, in Mireille's opinion, is a widely unknown institution that is popular within a growing fan base. The biggest problem with adoption is the lack of publicity, but Mireille feels that adoption would become more favored if it enjoyed more exposure. "Those who don't support adoption are those who haven't yet been exposed to it". She noted that most of the parents who want to adopt are those who are already immersed in a multi-cultural world. For example, at least half of the parents work for a European community entity such as the European Economic Community (EEC), the European Union (EU), or another international organization. Many adoptions are interracial and tend not to result in any discrimination or racism against the children.

Although Mireille has not yet recommended adoption, or adopted a child herself, she says she is willing to consider adoption in the future, and would willingly recommend it if asked. She cautions that adoption is a personal choice and should not be thrust on anybody. There are many risks in adoption, especially international adoption, and the path is long and difficult, but the benefits are likely to outweigh the potential losses in her opinion.

Brigitte

In Belgium I also interviewed a worker at the Adoption Bureau of *La Communauté Française* named Brigitte. It was an interesting counterpoint to the IAS because the Adoption Bureau has a much longer history than the IAS. Brigitte has been working there for fifteen years, and is also the author of a book that helps potential parents adopt. Her job is to work with other adoption professionals to review dossiers of prospective parents. These dossiers include applications for adoption and the results of their home study. In this capacity she works eight to

nine hours a day, five days a week, and occasionally attends meetings on Saturday mornings. She also works in Luxembourg, where she meets with parents directly for group support meetings on the weekends.

She is an avid advocate of adoption; she has a degree in psychology and psychotherapy from a Parisian University. Brigitte has also traveled throughout Europe, North America, and Latin America, and attributes her favorable opinion of adoption to her travels and experiences. Traveling has helped her perform her job better because it allows her to understand a wider range of human experience. This helps her to better understand what the applicants are attempting to convey through their dossiers, which is difficult at times because she has no personal contact with them.

Since Brigitte's job is to correct, accept, or refuse dossiers, she sees people with widely varying emotional reactions to adoption. In her experience, most people are disgruntled at the beginning of the adoption process because of the immense paperwork, and numerous meetings, tests, and interviews. However, the vast majority of adoptive parents are happy at the end and learn the underlying logic of such an intense screening process. She did acknowledge the difficulty adoptive parents have with being scrutinized. It is difficult for them to be obligated to prove their fitness as parents as biological parents are not. Brigitte points out, though, that the choice to become an adoptive parent is not the same as the choice to become a biological parent. One cannot accidentally adopt, and it is nearly impossible for an adoptive parent to be with their adopted child from birth. Therefore adoptive parents will not have the same influence over every aspect of their child's life in the way that biological parents would. Brigitte also remarked that while there are no open adoptions in Belgium, there is no secrecy. While adoptions are closed in

the legal sense, the transactions are openly discussed as one would if discussing their biologically determined family.

Brigitte explained that there are two types of adoption in Belgium, simple and plenary. Plenary adoption is what Americans would consider as a "normal" adoption, where a child is separated from their biological family and legally joins a new one. Simple adoption is used to describe a child not fully removed from their biological family. For example, a spouse can adopt their spouse's children from a previous relationship through simple adoption, and adults over the age of eighteen can be adopted through simple adoption, usually by a step-parent. These two types of adoption may also be international or domestic. According to Brigitte, about thirty Belgian children are adopted out of the roughly four hundred children that are adopted by Belgians each year. Typically, in an international adoption, prospective parents conduct searches individually and contact foreign orphanages directly because there are only ten agencies in the country allowed to facilitate adoptions. These ten agencies are all run by volunteers and are not open full time, and consequently cannot accommodate all international adoptions.

Personally, she does not feel that there is discrimination against adoption in Belgium whether it is transracial or not. In her work environment, the colleague with whom Brigitte spends the most time is from a mixed race family (her mother is black and her father is white). According to Brigitte there is no discrimination against her colleague. In Brigitte's opinion, there is no racism in Belgium today, and the effect of immigration results in limited overt discrimination. The only people in the adoption process who are viewed negatively are the judges. Public opinion towards them has nothing to do with race, and everything to do with fact that they decide whether an adoption will be legally finalized or not. She encourages the parents that she meets with in Luxembourg, and those that she has met with in the past in Belgium, to

immerse themselves in the culture of their adopted child in order to better empathize with them and help them learn who they are as individuals. Many Belgians choose to adopt children from Eastern Europe, but the reasoning is based as much in the preference for children who will physically resemble their adoptive parents as in the geographical proximity and ease of travel.

Brigitte is the mother of two biological children, but has never adopted and does not intend to. For her, adoption is not a good choice because she was introduced to the subject much later in her life, after she already had children, and decided not to take on the project of raising more. However, she has recommended adoption to family and friends as a positive option instead of a last resort. She also emphasized the importance of teaching her children about the cultures of the world by learning about them herself.

Interviews in France

Gabrielle, Georges, Louis, Jacqueline, Mathieu, and Luc

I was fortunate to visit an entire family in a very small town in the Dordogne region. The mother, Gabrielle, is the author of a book describing her experience with adoption and works with a job placement agency, Georges the father is an architect, Louis and Jacqueline were both adopted, and Mathieu and Luc are biological siblings as well as the foster sons of Gabrielle and Georges. The Louis was sixteen, Jacqueline was fourteen, Mathieu was eight, and Luc was five years old in 2007. Neither parent has large families; Gabrielle has one brother, and Georges has one half brother. They decided to adopt after a string of miscarriages and failed In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) treatments, but they had been discussing adopting children since before they married. While they experienced difficulties with adoption, such as the lengthy process,

expensive cost, and exceptional psychological needs of the children, both are happy with their decision to adopt.

Despite being secluded in a small town located twenty minutes from the nearest train station by car the family remains culturally immersed in the world. When asked how many cultures he feels he belongs to, Georges replied "I am only part of one culture, the culture of the world". Gabrielle is also interested in cultures of the world, though for her part she distinguishes them from one another. Cultures, to her, are not definable on a national or regional level because the definition would be too broad. The only way to define culture, for her, is on a personal level: "… each person has their own culture". Her own life is a study in multi-culturalism: she was born and raised in Italy, has lived in cities throughout France. Additionally, Gabrielle's sister in-law was born in Germany. Due to her adoption experiences and love of traveling she has friends and contacts in several other countries. She went so far as to describe new cultural experiences as "vital" to both her and her husband. They both agreed that it is their moral responsibility to accept people regardless of race, ethnicity, culture, or socio-economic status.

They believe so deeply in learning about and experiencing other cultures that it is reflected in both of their lives. In Gabrielle's job as a professional social integration counselor, she places unemployed men into jobs, and one of the requirements is that personal (racial, ethnic, cultural, or socioeconomic status) backgrounds are not taken into account when finding jobs. Gabrielle and Georges believe that children should be taught as much about other cultures as their own, and they have raised their children with this point of view. Jacqueline was unsurprised that a student from the United States was visiting, and Louis was not even there. To them, it is not extraordinary to host a visitor from another country for the weekend. However, Luc, who has not lived with Gabrielle and Georges as long as their adopted children, was

enthralled with me because I was from another country, and spent most of the evening showing off by drawing pictures.

Georges, who agrees with his wife's attitude of openness, did point out that they were unique in France in that respect. "Culture," he said, "is not national identity. And the French are selective about both. If a child is adopted from another country, it will take three generations for their family to be considered French. Racism still exists." Gabrielle tired to explain racism as *la bête humaine* (the archaic instincts of humans). Her husband agreed, saying that he believes that if you don't respect others, you can't respect yourself.

Both parents felt that children should be placed with loving, supportive families regardless of culture. Gabrielle remarked that those who believe adopted children to be fortunate have forgotten the circumstances that originally rendered the child adoptable. Since those children have already suffered, Gabrielle views it as her duty to help them, regardless of their country of origin. In her opinion, children should not be matched with adoptive families on the basis of physical resemblance because even biological children never perfectly resemble their parents. Adoption is distinct because in almost every case, adoption was not the originally preferred method. Therefore it is singularly difficult to measure satisfaction with adoption.

Their family and community have been supportive of them throughout the adoption process, which is most likely due to the small and personal nature of both groups. Georges feels that the community is "certainly not racist" towards them. Instead, the community is fairly eclectic, especially for such a small town, and they feel that their children have been well integrated. There are members of the community that have been less open to adoption, but nothing "unexpected from a rural community" according to the parents. To them, communities are like a paint palette, within which opinions remain the same, but differ in strengths.

Gabrielle's father was disappointed that he would not have biological grandchildren, but the first time he held Jacqueline was the last time he voiced a negative opinion about adopting. Gabrielle's mother has not been a part of her life for many decades, so her opinion of adoption was irrelevant. Both of George's parents were thrilled about their decision to adopt.

They chose to adopt internationally both because of the years-long waiting list for a French child, but also because they preferred the idea of an international adoption. For them, the idea of providing a home to a child in need was an added bonus and justification for adoption. Georges holds that life leads certain people to adopt, as it led them to adopt. We discussed a popular thought at the moment, that adoption is a type of neo-colonialism, but they disagree almost completely. International adoption is an example of international solidarity, an instance where a child who needs a family is not limited by their country of birth. Both of them agree that the experience, while difficult and riddled with obstacles, was rewarding, and if they had the decision to make again, they would not change anything.

Sebastien

Although the French typically adopt independently there are government agencies that control adoption and disseminate information. I was able to interview Sebastien, who directs one of the main agencies in Paris, *Enfants et Familles d'Adoption – EFA* (Children and Families of Adoption), that deals with parents at every stage of the adoption process. He is a full time worker, and said that he enjoys every aspect of his job. Sebastien speaks to parents about the possibility of adoption, helps them to create their dossiers and select their child's country of origin, details the steps necessary to adopt, and supports parents through the legal process in France and their child's country of origin, among other tasks. Both as the director of EFA and as an individual he has a vested interest in supporting the education of cultures. He feels that as a

community, it is the French population's duty to accept new members from varying cultures. This duty is taken seriously and performed well, he thinks, especially in Paris.

Sebastien is also an adoptive father. In 1979 he married, and in 1982 he and his wife decided to adopt. It took another two years for them to decide on an agency, REMY, and another four years until the adoption was completed. The decision to adopt was based on the desire to have a child, to create a family, and to welcome a child that had no other chance of having a home. He and his wife chose to adopt two children from Chile (although he was quick to point out that while Chile was their country of origin, they are French now) because they cherished the thought of having children from a different culture. Their family and friends supported them through their adoption, but few else did. He echoed a sentiment that I first heard in Belgium: "…the community that has had no previous experience with adoption does not support us. They do not oppose our choice, they simply do not understand it and therefore distrust it." Both his wife's and his family were very supportive of their choice to adopt, but may not have fully understood the reason why they chose that route because for them adoption was not a necessity. It surprised me initially that Sebastien would not repeat the same decision as he is a very strong advocate of adoption. He explained later that his decision not to adopt again has more to do with his age than his satisfaction with previous adoption experiences.

When I met with Sebastien, he and I created a shortened version of the questionnaire (found in Appendix B) so that he could distribute it to parents during the following months. I have remained in contact with him, and recently requested any responses he had received. He apologized, but said that he had not received any responses. Sebastien thinks this is partially because adoptive parents have an incredible amount of forms to complete and my questionnaire was not a priority, and partially because there was little interest in the research.

Marie

The next interview was with Marie, who worked with an *Organisme Autorisée d'Adoption - OAA* (Agency Authorized for Adoption) in Lille named Païda. Her interview was one of the most interesting because her opinions on adoption were contrary to almost every previous opinion that had been voiced. She works at Païda part time, but is also "on call" in case the families they are helping have emergencies abroad, which she said happens multiple times each week (emergencies could range from not having the proper photo for the child's visa to changes in the child's availability for adoption). Her job involves performing administrative tasks, working directly with the families to write dossiers and contracts or set up interviews, being a liaison between the parents and the MAI (*Mission d'Adoption International* – the International Mission of Adoption), providing counsel to parents, corresponding with their foreign counterpoints, and any other task required of the agency. There are two other women who work at the agency with her: Mélanie is an accountant and Sabine is a specialist in the legal aspect of adoption both in France and abroad. All three of the women are volunteers, as are almost all workers at OAAs in France. Mélanie and Sabine hold other jobs as well while Marie is a retired professor. Together this team facilitates the adoption of thirty children every year. All three have special training for their particular tasks at Païda, and they are also required to read psychological, legal, and sociological journals constantly to keep their knowledge of adoption current.

Her interest in adoption is the result of a lifelong passion to help children. When she began volunteering to help with adoption thirty years ago there were some questions from her friends and family, but they quickly became accustomed to the idea. She has since adopted two children, Ana from Djibouti and Patrick from Haiti, and also has two children biologically.

Marie and her biological children are White, but her adopted children are both Black, and the Black children have noticed that they are stopped and asked for their papers (the French version of an I.D. card) far more often than their White siblings. Her oldest daughter, Linde, does not see any difference between adopted children and biological children, but does see a difference in the way they are treated because of their race.

It is partly for this reason that Marie puts emphasis on the importance of culture in transracial adoptions. "Children, especially the littlest ones, arrive here (in France) with no culture, which becomes a problem because they become bathed in the culture of their adoptive parents, which is not their own." She says that those who believe that racism does not exist in France are being deceived by hypocrites in high places. France is certainly a racist country, but the racism becomes more and less apparent in different regions. Marie distinguishes these regions as urban or rural, but there are also cities, such as Paris or Marseilles where racism has a stronger presence. Marie's interview was the first in which racism was acknowledged as a part of the present as well as the past.

Marie believes that adoption is a method of providing a child with a family, not providing a family with a child. Also, she feels that adoption has become banal, which is potentially fatal for an institution as unique as adoption. Adoption itself should be a last resort, in Marie's way of thinking, and the priority should be keeping the child with their parents (this is a belief that is shared by enough members of the French government that it is the policy in France). She deplores the manner in which prospective parents treat international adoption today, saying that they have an "I have the money, so therefore I deserve the child" mentality that has led Marie to view adoption in a negative light.

Marie explained that French citizens adopt individually for three main reasons. First, OAAs are staaffed by volunteers, and as such they are not capable of facilitating every adoption in France, so there are adoptions that must necessarily be conducted by individuals. Second, the French are very proud of their personal liberties, and there is a general feeling that individuals should be able to adopt on their own, without government intrusion. Third, individual adoption seems less expensive, which makes everyone happy. Parents working with an OAA must declare every expense associated with adoption. While working with an OAA is not always more expensive, it commonly appears to be due to the declarations of expenses. However, Marie predicts a change in the future as fewer countries accept individual parents without a government or agency representative.

Whether conducted individually or through an OAA, Marie believes adoption is as private an issue as biological procreation, and that it is not treated as such. Adoption is an intense personal project, and she believes that it is being treated frivolously. She would never recommend adoption any more than she would recommend having a child biologically. It is an extremely personal decision, and while she will happily help someone who has already decided to adopt on their own, she cannot recommend it, and would question the person's motives who would.

Marie also questions the motives of parents who want to adopt because she believes that adoption is becoming a form of neo-colonialism where parents from rich countries are unwittingly buying children from poor countries under the guise of "fees". These couples are adopting only because they cannot have children biologically instead of out of an interest to adopt for the child's sake. Marie has become disenchanted with adoption, but finished the

interview by saying that she will continue to work with Païda for many years to come because she wants to help improve adoption, even if for just one family.

Isabelle

My last interview was with the author of a master's thesis on adoption as well as a book on interracial adoption names Isabelle. She lives in a small town about an hour outside of Paris, and invited me to interview her in her home where she now lives alone. Isabelle has never married, and decided to adopt her daughter because it was the best option among a limited set of choices. However, she is very supportive of adoption and offered unique insight into the racial and cultural aspects of adoption.

Isabelle's main philosophy about adoption is a question: why would parents choose to adopt a child that was completely different from them? In her book and our interview she dealt with three types of motivations that would inspire parents. The categories are general motivation, unacceptable motivation, and acceptable motivation. General motivation includes the desire to have a child, the biological inability to do so, and the belief that one would make a good parent. Examples of unacceptable motivation include wanting to do adopt in anticipation of being publicly noticed for adopting (i.e. in the way that Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt in the U.S. or Josephine Baker in France are recognized), using adoption as a means of escaping the process of sexual procreation (whether caused by shame of their infertility or the belief that a child should simply 'appear' for them with no effort on their part), adopting a child for sexual purposes, adopting one or more children for the purpose of creating multiple versions of themselves, or hoping that the adopted child will support their adoptive parents later in life (more common with older couples who have no relatives or heirs). Types of acceptable motivation include recognizing the biological impossibility of creating a child and reverting to adoption as a

second reason, attempting to remove a child from a miserable and hopeless situation, desiring to adopt a second or third child from the same ethnic background as their older children, or desiring to adopt a child to mirror the ethnicity of one or both members of a mixed couple.

Isabelle said she is automatically suspicious of couples that choose to adopt interracially because of the difficulty of integrating a child of another race into French culture. An interesting point she made was that it is easier to integrate an entire family of foreigners than trying to integrate a single child. This is because in a family the members will support and be supported by other members. A single child does not have the same type of support system and is more vulnerable to exclusion, discrimination, or racism.

The adopted child's country of origin is also a critical determinant in international adoption, but is often neglected by adoptive parents. Other countries' opinions of adoption, whether they consider it a shame, a fact of life, a type of neo-colonialism, or if they will only allow relinquish children to certain countries, have a direct effect on the adopted child's feelings about being adopted. Since Isabelle's work was focused on Korean adoption, she focuses on the varying opinions of adoption in Korea that affect children adopted from Korea. For example, North Korea has accused South Korea of selling their children, while voices on both sides have professed that if a child has truly been abandoned, it is still a crime against the country to let that child be adopted by foreigners. Children adopted from Korea are raised in the midst of these accusations that prevent their inclusion in French society as well as their exclusion from Korean society. Isabelle said that adopted children often feel the need to choose either their native or their adoptive culture to belong to at the expense of the other.

Despite Isabelle's hesitations and negative opinions about adoption, she did adopt a daughter from South Korea. Her daughter is now grown up and living on her own, but she was

raised in a mix of French and Korean culture, and has known her whole life that she was adopted. Isabelle's interview was a fantastic way to summarize the previous interviews: adoption can be fantastic if understood and undertaken correctly, but there are dark sides that will always exist for the children, especially those of another culture.

Discussions in Belgium

Along with formal interviews, I had many informal discussions in France and Belgium. In Belgium I attempted to talk to everyone I met about adoption. I spoke with people from all walks of life: members of hotel staffs, workers at a satellite office of an agency I used to work for, waiters, people waiting for and in public transportation, librarians, and workers at bookstores, to name a few. Most of the people who were willing to talk to me resulted in long conversations.

One day I visited several bus stops, subways, and train stations around Brussels and asked people if they knew anyone who had been adopted because I wanted to see how prevalent it was. I explained that I was an American student researching adoption, and asked if, without giving names, they could say whether or not they knew someone who had been adopted. The major problems were that people thought I was soliciting and wouldn't talk to me at all, had to get on their bus/train, or would talk with me only until I mentioned adoption. Of the almost hundred people with whom I initiated a conversation, only about ten would answer my questions about adoption. Of those people, nobody knew someone who had been adopted. I was surprised that so many people were unwiling to answer my questions after speaking with me for a while, even after being offered a guarantee of anonymity. I had assumed that under the condition of anonymity I would be able to find a few people who were somehow connected with adoption, but I found no one through that process.

In the national library I had trouble locating books about adoption, so I began questioning the librarians to see if they could help. They were unable to help me locate information, and were at a loss as to where else I could look (such as a governmental agency, or even a good website), which also surprised me. As librarians, I had hoped that they would know how to access information even if they were not intimately familiar with the subject.

One of the best leads from a conversation in Belgium came from a worker at the satellite office of the International Trade Division of the Ohio Department of Development, where I used to work. His previous neighbors were a mixed couple who had adopted a child from China, but we were unable to get in contact with them. The worker was able to find an organization geared towards young families in Belgium named the Brussels Childbirth Trust (BCT). BCT offers pre- and postnatal support, information services, and social activities and events. The director of the BCT informed me that they had not had any adoptive families contact them for support. This means that either the number of young adoptive families seeking support was almost negligible, or that they went elsewhere for more specialized support groups. However, I was not able to locate many support groups in Belgium, much less groups that would be directed at a very small demographic.

Discussions in France

I had several conversations that were more productive with people in France. For example, when I was on the train from Paris to Bordeaux I met two young men about my age who were going to meet their friend, who had been adopted. He was adopted from an Eastern European country, and I was told that he bears a close physical resemblance to his adopted parents. In fact, he wasn't told that he was adopted until about two years ago (in 2005), when he was eighteen years old and his parents made the decision to adopt again. However, his adoptive

parents have decided to raise his new little sister completely differently by not hiding her adoption from her. He is having trouble adjusting to the idea that he was adopted and not informed. As a result, he can no longer trust his adoptive parents and has moved out of their house.

In Paris I stayed at one hotel for an entire week, and asked the concierge if he knew anyone who had been adopted. While he did not, his brother worked with an immigration bureau, and it was through him that I was granted an interview with Sebastien. I was surprised that the concierge's first thought was to look at adoption through immigration, because it seems that the immigration aspect of adoption is secondary to the actual process. However, he was extremely helpful, despite my errant assumption, which was a pleasant surprise.

In preparation for an interview I searched Paris for the author's book, which is not available online or in the United States. My search for that book took me through many bookstores with workers with varying abilities to aid my search. FNAC, the French version of Barnes and Noble or Borders, had three books on adoption on its shelves in Paris, and they were all focused on stories of adoption. Smaller bookstores, though, provided much more useful information, especially the university bookstores. The workers in those bookstores were able to direct me to subjects related to adoption if they had no books specifically on adoption. Unfortunately, no librarians or bookstore clerks knew anyone personally who had adopted or had been adopted.

During my visits to several agencies I was able to converse with many of the secretaries. I was stunned that the vast majority of them didn't care for adoption past the fact that it gave them a job. With their attitudes towards adoption, they were unable to give me much more information than could be gleaned from their agency's pamphlets. One secretary was

exceptionally helpful and although she was not able to help me book an interview, pointed me towards the town halls where there were plenty of packets of information about adoption. Her friend had adopted a little boy from Russia who was three years old in 2007, and she said that she would consider adopting a child of her own in the future, but was not ready for such a step at the moment.

Activities in the United States

This thesis is the extrapolation of an earlier project on adoption, through which I met two workers at Franklin County Children's Services (FCCS) and attended National Adoption Day. Amy, the worker at FCCS, was a social worker who had been involved in adoption for more than ten years. She explained the process of adoption from the removal of children form their homes to National Adoption Day. In her opinion, adoption is an extremely emotional process, and those involved with adoption are singularly empathetic. Her son was not adopted, but at seventeen years old, was interested in his mother's work and wanted to become a social worker like her.

National Adoption Day is held at the Franklin County Courthouse in November every year; I attended the 2005 celebration. It was the first place I visited where every single person in the room was directly linked with adoption. There were workers from FCCS, attorneys, adoptive parents, children, extended family, and dear friends. Each family would go into the courtroom at their appointed time, and anyone who wished could follow them in and observe the finalization of their adoptions. The family I witnessed was a couple that was about thirty-five or forty years old and three children. The three children, two girls and a boy, were unrelated but had all been fostered by the couple. Extended family was there, and while the biological mothers were not, they were represented by their attorneys. The adoption was simple: the judge asked questions of

the social workers, attorneys, parents, and the children, and then pronounced the adoption. Such was my introduction to adoption in the United States.

In the course of this research I continued discussing adoption with as many people as possible, questioning workers at adoption agencies, and attending adoption seminars. The main benefit of attending seminars was that I could informally meet with current adoptive parents, prospective adoptive parents, and workers. Through these interactions I discovered that adoption is almost invariably met with fear and excitement by prospective parents. Workers seem to treat adoption as a commercial transaction; there is more focus for them on finishing the adoption process than on the children themselves. However, the workers at agencies in the United States do not match children and act purely as facilitators. There are some agencies that have social workers and case-workers, but many agencies are simply there to walk parents neatly through the legal process. This is not to say that the workers at agencies do not care about children. On the contrary, they all say they became in involved in adoption to help children. Their job though is not to care for children physically or psychologically, but simply to help children be adopted by parents.

I found that, with very few exceptions, every person I talked to in the United States knew at least one person who had been adopted. From the workers at the Starbucks on High Street to professors, students, residents of my hometown, friends, acquaintances, even people on the COTA buses, almost every person I asked knew someone who had been adopted. They also gave far more details, with less encouragement, than their French and Belgian counterparts. Many people who I talked to would call a friend to come join the conversation, and I was never once rejected. The people who did not know someone who had been adopted often said

something similar to “I’m sure I know someone, I just do not know who they are”. I was very surprised that they thought adoption to be so widespread.

Based on my discussions, I was not surprised that the American media offered information on adoption in almost every medium. Recently, two major films have been released that specifically concern adoption. “August Rush” was released in November of 2007, and “Juno” was released one month later (IMDB, 2008). Dateline ran a special about adoption in Guatemala in January of 2008 (MSNBC, 2008). Bookstores such as Barnes and Noble or Borders have sections of books about adoption, as do local and university libraries. Finding information on adoption in the United States was significantly easier than finding information in France and Belgium, which is another sign that adoption in the United States is a much more popular and public affair than in France or Belgium.

Findings

The general purpose of the thesis is to study the culture of adoption in France, Belgium, and the United States and analyze how it affects adoption. "Culture" here means attitudes, traditions, and beliefs concerning adoption. The simplest way to qualitatively study adoption is to divide it into domestic and international adoptions and address the components of each type of adoption.

Domestic Adoption

Factors Influencing Domestic Adoptions

There are so few adoptable children in France and Belgium that the wait for a French or Belgian child is at least five years after approval has been granted, a process that can take more than a year itself. The qualifications that a prospective parent must meet are stringent due to the high demand for native children and the comparatively small number available (Rejou, 2003). This has led to a good situation for the native children of those countries because each year all adoptable children are adopted. In contrast, the United States has more adoptable children than parents willing to adopt them (Pertman, 2000). Possible reasons for this discrepancy include the number of children in out of home care, the approval and visitation process, the types of adoption, public opinion towards it, the changing definition of family, population size, and abortion.

Out of Home Care

The foster care system in the United States has a positive effect on the number of adopted children because many prospective parents become foster parents before adopting. In 2005, there were 51,323 children adopted from foster care (AFCARS Report 13, 2006). This number

will most likely increase in the future as the American out of home care system switches from a goal of permanence to reunification[5] (Pertman, 2000). Currently, half of the children in foster care whose cases were completed last year were returned to their biological families, while twenty percent were adopted (AFCARS Report 13, 2006). However, American children in foster care are more likely to become adoptable than children in French or Belgian foster care.

The French and Belgian governments are hesitant to remove children from their homes. For example, one woman I interviewed who fostered two sons did not live with them full time. Instead, they lived with their biological parents for half the week and with her and her family for the other half. She was involved in their classroom and extra-curricular activities, but in conjunction with, not replacement of, their biological parents. She described this situation as typical foster care. Since a child who is still under the guardianship of their biological parents cannot become adoptable without the express permission of their parents, it is very difficult for a foster child to become adoptable in those countries. It seems even more difficult when compared to the American system of foster care that removes the child from their home. The differences between the foster care system thus make it more likely that a child in the American foster care system will become adoptable than a child in the French or Belgian system, which increases the number of adoptable children in the United States without increasing adoptions.

The Process of Domestic Adoptions

The process of adoption, as described in the first section, also has an effect on the number of adoptable children. The problem with domestic adoption in the United States is that there are more than enough adoptable children, but parents choose to adopt internationally instead of

[5] Reunification emphasizes the importance of returning a child to their biological family, while permanence focuses on placing the child in a permanent situation, whether it is with their biological family or not. The idea of permanence will allow many children to become adoptable in a shorter time period than they previously would be (Pertman, 2000).

domestically. This may be because the process of domestic adoption is convoluted, uncertain, and labyrinthine to potential parents. They may be frightened by the idea of undergoing the adoption process only to be matched with a child that they do not want, having the birth mother change her mind, or being forced to foster ((Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, 2007). This results in a lack of adults willing to become parents of American children, and therefore fewer adoptions.

In France and Belgium the process is more streamlined, which may help explain the high number of prospective adoptive parents. Additionally, a child will not be matched to a family before they become officially adoptable, after which point the birth mother cannot change her decision. This too helps encourage domestic adoption by removing a variable found in international adoption. While there is a long waiting period for a native child, prospective parents are informed of the wait from the beginning of the application process, and are less likely to be unduly frustrated by longer-than-expected waiting periods. Although these differences seem minute, they have succeeded in convincing enough potential parents to adopt all children who need homes, which is something the United States has yet to achieve.

Open versus Closed and Simple versus Plenary Adoptions

The United States offers three different types of adoption: open, closed, and semi-closed. The names refer to the status of the child's birth and adoption records. Each adoption is assigned a status based on the circumstances of the adoption and the preference of the biological mother (Hicks, 2004). To Americans, a closed adoption is a secret adoption. In a closed adoption the child may never be informed of their personal history. Circumstances that lend themselves to closed adoptions are adoptions where the child was placed as an infant with a family they physically resemble or adoptions of children relinquished by birth mothers who do not want to

be sought out when the child is grown (for example, if the child was conceived through rape or incest, or if the birth mother is concerned about her social standing or marriage). An open adoption is the extreme opposite, and the biological and adoptive families may have almost constant interaction throughout the child's life, or only when the child reaches an appropriate age (Falker, 2006). While not every child in an open adoption maintains constant contact with their birth family, every adopted child who maintains constant contact with their birth family is in an open adoption. Semi-closed adoptions cover the rest of the possibilities for adoption.

The current trend in America that I have observed in books and discussions seems to favor open adoption. Throughout the history of adoption in America there have been multiple popular movements supporting the sealing and opening of adoption records (Carp, 2004). One book that profiles the most recent movement or re-opening the records quotes an adult adoptee's opinion on the movement, "…adoptees having civil rights is just … normal" (Carp, 2004). This quote reflects the attitudes of Americans that everyone has a "right" to their personal information, in this case their birth records. It is logical that a closed adoption would strike Americans today as an infringement upon adoptees' "…psychological need to search for their birth parents" (Eldridge, 1999)

France and Belgium offer two types of adoption, simple and plenary, that are not entirely parallel to relative and non-relative adoption. Like relative adoption, simple adoption can be enacted by family members, but unlike relative adoption, it also encompasses children adopted by their parent's partner, regardless of marriage, as well as the adoption of all adults over the age of eighteen. Plenary adoption is almost exactly the same as non-relative adoption, and is the most common type of adoption there. The difference is that all plenary adoptions are legally closed, but are treated as open. Every adoption book or pamphlet I read stresses the importance

of keeping adoption an open topic of conversation among the family. I attribute this difference to the contrasting norms of privacy in the United States as compared to France and Belgium. The French and Belgians are hesitant to talk about their private lives, and it is logical that they would find no fault in a closed adoption system. For example, when I was contacting the author of an adoption book, I inquired after her children whom she had discussed at length in her book. She replied that "family issues are a bit personal; we can discuss them when you arrive". I was stunned because she had made her family's story public, and had even disclosed their names. The only difference between the book and reality was that she published under a pseudonym.

This difference in the type of adoption encourages more adoption in France and Belgium because it appeals to a common culture of privacy. Americans may be attracted to open or semi-closed adoptions that are typically only possible in domestic adoptions, and this may help increase the number of parents willing to adopt.

Public Opinion of Domestic Adoption

The general attitude towards adoption in the United States, based on books and conversations, seems to be very positive. Almost every single American I have asked about adoption not only knows at least one person who has been adopted, but views adoption in a favorable light. Although there are stories in the media about murdered or abused adopted and fostered children, there is an almost equal amount of publicity given to stories about search and reunion. Finding books about adoption in the United States was easy. I searched my hometown's library, the Columbus public library, online journals, and the Ohio State University library. Each site offered entire sections on adoption and included adoption stories, manuals and handbooks, research on adoption and foster care, information on the psychological needs of adopted children, and many other topics about adoption. About eighty percent of people my age

whom I have asked about adoption have said they would seriously consider it in the future[6]. Concerns about public opinion are currently not a deterrent to someone's choice to adopt. However, there are exceptions to this rule. Minority cultures within the United States, such as certain Hispanic or Islamic cultures, consider it shameful to adopt or relinquish a child (Esposito and Biafora, 2007). It will be interesting to see how adoption changes in the future as society is increasingly infused with children from these cultures.

Public opinion about mothers who release their children for adoption has become less severely critical, but there is still a stigma associated with it. Despite the increase in children born to unwed mothers, society still reserves a type of pitying condemnation for them. Birth mothers' attitudes reflect this denunciation through the use of closed adoptions. Even today, there are women who choose a closed adoption because they do not want to jeopardize their place in society by having an unwanted child appear on their doorstep claiming parentage (Carp, 2002).

In French and Belgian society, the public is generally ignorant of domestic adoption. Two important books about children (Les Droits des Enfants, Royal, 2007) and families (Familles, Mariage, Divorce, Bawin-Legros, 1990) make no mention of adoption. In the Belgian national library I found only two books specifically concerning adoption, and only a small handful of others that addressed adoption as one of many topics. The bookstores, while they did have sections about adoption, mainly sold stories of adoption as opposed to manuals or handbooks. Most of the recent literature I found was in pamphlet form. Several interviewees in France and Belgium, when questioned about their community's support, replied that their

[6] Most of my conversations were conducted on the Ohio State University's main campus, around a small suburb in Northeastern Ohio, and among parents and workers attending adoption events around Columbus and Cleveland.

communities are largely unaware of adoption. During my conversations with the French and Belgians, the strongest opinion voiced to me was indignation that someone would be publicly discussing something as personal as adoption. I spent an entire day in Brussels, and made several attempts in France, to initiate conversations with people about adoption. I would approach them in restaurants, hotels, on public transportation, libraries, bookstores, or parks, and explain that I was an American student interested in adoption. With the exception of workers in bookstores, almost every person declined to talk to me. Certain locations, such as public transportation, lent themselves less to the project than others, such as libraries. The staff at the bookstores were more helpful, but uninformed. In all, I only received nine positive responses out of eighty-seven attempts. It was interesting though that almost every person who knew someone who had been adopted or had a positive opinion about it was willing to sit down and talk with me for at least an hour, and many were also able to point me towards other people who would be able to discuss adoption. I got the impression that adoption, while it falls under the taboo category of personal family life for those who do not adopt, is an acceptable and even exciting topic of conversation for those who do.

A stigma associated with surrendering a child for adoption still exists in France and Belgium, as evidenced by the prevalence of closed adoptions. Information connecting children to their biological families is sparse at best. What is known is that one hundred thousand children each year are placed in foster care in France (Mairie de Paris, 2003). A number of children are legally relinquished, others are abandoned, and the rest are removed from their homes by the government for their own safety. I have not yet been able to find statistics on how many children fall into each category. In Belgium, the statistics are even less clear. I assume

that this lack of publicly available statistics has to do with the fact that family life is extremely private and protected in these countries.

I attribute this general ignorance to the small number of domestic adoptions in both countries. There are fewer than one thousand adoptions finalized each year in France (Rejou, 2003), and fewer than fifty in Belgium (Service Public Fédéral, 2007). This amounts to .0001 percent of the population of France and .00003 percent of the population of Belgium (CIA World Factbook, 2008). In the United States there are roughly fifty thousand domestic adoptions each year (AFCARS Report 13, 2006), which amounts to .002 percent of the population (CIA World Factbook, 2008). Therefore, the apathy towards adoption in France and Belgium as compared to the United States is not unexpected. What was unexpected is the degree to which adoption is known in the United States, but that may also be partially due to the higher number of international adoptions each year.

The Family

In all three countries, the definition of "family" is changing. During the 1950s, the family was composed of a father and a mother married to each other and had children together. Today, a family can be adults living alone, with a partner or a spouse, with or without children, children living with their grandparents, divorced or remarried couples, step-children, half-siblings, adopted children, and other options[7]. In 1999 the portion of the census entitled "Household and Family Characteristics" changed its name to "America's Families and Living Arrangements" (U.S. Census, 2004). Two major changes that have affected adoption are the increase of single adult households as well as gay and lesbian couples. Both of these groups are more likely to adopt because they have fewer options of creating a family. This encourages

[7] For the Census' reports on children in the United States please see Appendix C.

adoption, and in many cases encourages domestic adoption because of the cost and the likelihood of being refused a child in countries where singles, gays, and lesbians are not allowed to adopt. Also, the increased divorce rate actually has a positive impact on the number of adoptions as new spouses adopt each other's children, which could make the number of adoptions look falsely high.

The situation is similar in France and Belgium in that the composition of the family is changing. For example, there is something called a PACS (le PActe Civil de Solidarité – a Civil Agreement of Solidarity), which is a pact entered into by two adults who are or will be living together but either cannot or do not wish to get married. The PACS offers many of the same rights and privileges as marriage, but can be dissolved with a three-months notice (Martel, 2001). In Belgium, as in France, marriage is slowly being replaced by civil partnerships. For the last several decades the marriage rate has been decreasing, and almost forty five percent of the adult population plans on never marrying (Bawin-Legros, 1988). This situation exists in both France and Belgium for similar reasons. For many the disenchantment with marriage comes from being divorced previously or watching one's parents divorce. Additionally, in both countries homosexual civil partnerships are legal but are not allowed in churches. Such partnerships discourage adoption because they have a tendency to be transient in nature, and to adopt a native child in either country virtually requires a couple to be married. Legally, the regulations do not stipulate that a couple must be married, but it is the preferred status, and due to the high number of applicants, only married couples are chosen (Rejou, 2003). I do not foresee the decrease in marriages affecting adoption negatively in the near future because that would require the number of marriages to decrease below the number of adoptable children. However, the overall effect of

integrating new family models into mainstream culture in France, Belgium, and the United States is that adoptions could become an increasingly popular method of creating a family.

Population Size and Growth Rate

France and Belgium have a different population size and growth rate that directly affects how many adoptable children are available. Regardless of the percentage of the population affected by adoption, France and Belgium have populations that are roughly five and thirty times smaller than that of the United States (CIA World Factbook, 2008). Additionally, neither country has a birth rate at replacement level, whereas the United States does (UN Population Policy Database, 2008). Therefore, I would expect France and Belgium to adopt fewer children total but more children per capita than Americans do. I was surprised to find that they did not, and I believe that the reason has to do with government support for the family.

Both countries, due to a declining and aging population, give family allowances to parents whether the child is biological or adopted. France's family allowance program is run by the federal government and includes a specific stipend for adoption. Non-adoption aid includes allocations for a young child, a handicapped child, or the beginning of the school year, among other reasons. The allocation given to parent a young child is roughly $250 a month, and the amount given to hire a nanny can be as high as $1,090 a month (caf.fr). Belgium provides many of the same allowances, including a designated allowance for adoption. A family is given $448 a month for adopting a child, no matter how many children are adopted (rkw.be). So in France and Belgium financial incapability is not an obstacle to adoption.

Considering the greater instance of adoption in the United States, it is surprising that there is less monetary support for adoption. There are programs such as TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), Medicaid, welfare, food stamps, and federal grants and loans to

cover the cost of the adoption process, but families that provide foster care receive money for the longest time period. Unlike France and Belgium, the American government emphasizes temporary assistance. This is because there is no need to encourage couples to have more children, while there is a need to help impoverished families. The transitory nature of assistance is based in the "do it yourself" culture of America, where the "self-made man" is highly respected. However, this lack of monetary support is perceived by many Americans as insufficient to cover the cost of adoption, and therefore discourages people from adopting for purely financial reasons. I do not understand why this is the case though, because there are sufficient grants and loans solely from the government to cover adoption, as well as grants given by many companies and religious associations. It is unfortunate that financial difficulties are perceived as insurmountable when in reality myriad options exist to help overcome those obstacles.

Abortion and Contraception

Abortion and contraception have a negative impact on the number of adoptable children in a given country. If fewer children are born, fewer children will be available to adopt. Also, surrendering a child for adoption is often an alternative to abortion, thus there is a very intimate link between abortion and adoption. Abortion in France is legal up to the tenth week of pregnancy, and after that only if it poses a severe health risk to the mother. An active pro-life movement began in the '90s, and there is still a stigma surrounding abortion. However, if an abortion is desired in France it is not overly difficult to locate a qualified doctor for the procedure (UN Population Policy Data Base: France, 2008). Abortion is equally legal in Belgium, and in fact seems to be more socially open in Belgium than in France or the United States (UN Population Policy Data Base: Belgium, 2008). Also, contraception is easily

accessible in France and Belgium. For example, while in Belgium I watched a family channel one night where shows that would be on the Disney channel or ABC in the United States were being aired, and I saw several commercials for condoms. In France, there are condom dispensers on the outside of many buildings so that they are accessible at all times of day and night. Abortion and contraception in France and Belgium help to create a situation in which almost every child that is born is desired. Not all children may have been conceived intentionally, but it is easy to control fertilization or to end an unwanted pregnancy so that there are fewer undesired children.

Like France and Belgium, the United States permits abortions. The U.S. also offers the abortion pill, which France does but Belgium does not. There is no specific time limit for abortions in the U.S.; instead, abortions must be conducted prior to fetal viability. The issue is strongly contested in the United States, and there are discrepancies between state laws, federal laws, and court rulings that complicate it further. Additionally, the regions from which adoptable children traditionally come have fewer abortion clinics (UN Population and Policy Database: U.S., 2008).

International Adoption

Factors Influencing International Adoption

An international adoption is a significantly more difficult undertaking than a domestic adoption for several reasons. International adoptions involve the laws of both countries as well as any relevant international laws. It is also more expensive because of travel requirements and there is greater uncertainty about the condition of the children. Additionally, approval for international adoption has become more difficult to obtain as the regulations created by other countries are becoming ever more strict. Despite all this, French, Belgian, and American

prospective parents still choose to adopt internationally, and the French and Belgians adopt more children internationally than domestically.

The Process of International Adoptions

The process of international adoption, as described in the Background section, has an effect on the number of children adopted from a given country and the choice of country from which prospective parents adopt. In France and Belgium the process of international adoption does not affect the number of children adopted each year to the extent that it affects the choice of countries from which a child is adopted. For example, the wait for an infant from China has been historically shorter, and although it has been increasing over the last two years, it remains one of the shortest options.

Americans, who are able to adopt more children domestically, are more easily influenced by the process of international adoption. The two variables that affect how many children are adopted by Americans internationally are the length of the wait, and the qualifications. Its difficult to determine how long the wait will be for an American child to be placed with a particular couple, and if they are looking for a healthy infant without special needs from the same ethnic background as themselves, the wait could be several years long (Schwartz and Kaslow, 2003). These same parents, however, could adopt internationally in a fraction of the time. There are instances where international adoption may take longer than a domestic adoption, but as these usually include confusion, corruption, and unnecessary legal processes, they can be avoided by choosing a well-established agency (European Adoption Consultants, 2007). This promotes adoption of infants in other countries and the adoption of toddlers and older children domestically.

Additionally, other countries have distinct qualifications which potential parents must meet. Examples of these include multiple trips to a country, proof of marriage or heterosexuality, evidence of a sufficient income, and letters from the prospective parents' religious leaders (Falker, 2006). Each case is different, but these qualifications can discourage future parents from adopting from a specific country. It does not have a negative effect on the total number of international adoptions because while one country may refuse a candidate, it is likely that at least one other country will accept their candidature. Therefore, the process of international adoption encourages more adoptions by Americans.

Foreign Adoption Laws and International Regulations

Foreign adoption laws can be more or less strict than domestic adoption laws, which discourage or encourage adoption respectively. Russia, for example, let all accreditations to American agencies to adopt expire in early 2007. They then reinstated non-expiring accreditations to agencies that had undergone intense scrutiny by the Russian government (European Adoption Consultants, 2007). China has also recently tightened their restrictions on adoption, and they currently only allow healthy heterosexuals to adopt (U.S. Department of State, 2008). Guatemala is in the midst of conforming to Hague Convention standards, and Vietnam is currently closed but should be open again soon for adoption from the U.S. (European Adoption Consultants, 2007). Many other countries are changing their adoption policies and requirements as a result of signing the Hague Convention.

Reasons for this movement towards more rigorous laws stem from abuses of the adoption system and negative publicity in the past (U.S. Department of State, 2008). Many of these rules are intended for Americans, as Americans had one of the weakest sets of restrictions prior to the implementation of the Hague Convention. Several countries therefore felt that Americans were

adopting too many of their children, or else that the selection process for adoptive parents in the United States was not rigid enough and children were being placed with abusive parents (Esposito and Biafora, 2007). This has already resulted in a minor reduction of the number of international adoptions, but may have incurred a positive change in the number of domestic adoptions as prospective parents were forced to reconsider internal adoption because they could no longer meet foreign requirements. Alternately, more international adoptions may be finalized after the United States implements changes necessary to conform to Hague Convention standards in April of 2008 (Hague Conference on Private International Law, 2008).

France and Belgium are not as affected by recent changes in foreign adoption laws because both countries are already signatories to the Hague Convention and put their parents through a demanding selection process (Hague Conference on Private International Law, 2008). This means that the United States will likely see a small decrease in the number of international adoptions as new laws take effect around the world. Foreseeable changes in the French and Belgian systems will include the reduction in the number of international adoptions conducted independently and the choice in countries from which to adopt. This is because the Hague Convention does not recognize independent adoptions, and although they are still legal internally and with countries that have not signed or implemented the Hague Convention (Hague Conference on Private International Law, 2008), independent adoptions will diminish in the future.

Selecting a Country

Choosing a country from which to adopt is affected by laws, culture, and history. For Americans, the countries of choice are located in Asia or South and Central America. This stems from the history of international adoption in the case of Asia as well as geographical and cultural

proximity in the case of South and Central America. For the last eighteen years, the principal countries from which to adopt have been Korea, Russia, or China, with one exception in 1991 when Romania was the most popular choice and Korea was the second (U.S. Department of State, 2008). However, if Americans wish to adopt children who physically resemble themselves, the main countries would be Russia and Eastern European countries, which are also important countries based on the numbers of children adopted from them. Eighteen of the top twenty countries from which Americans adopted in 2006 were Asian, South or Central American, or Eastern European (U.S. Department of State, 2008).

France and Belgium, with histories of colonialism, adopt from countries with which they share a historical link. This pattern is becoming less prevalent, as Belgium is seeing an increase in the number of children from China (Service Public Fédéral de la Belgique, 2006) but this may be due to the ease of adopting children from those countries. France still conducts many international adoptions with former colonies. Vietnam is the biological home of nineteen percent of internationally adopted children, and Haiti is home to an additional eleven percent. Other important countries for France include Burkina Faso and Mali, which are also ex-colonies of France, and Ethiopia, which is an ex-colony of Italy (Mairie de Paris, 2003). Since Belgium does not have the extensive imperial past that France does, it is less likely that Belgians will follow the same pattern as the French in adopting from their previous colonies.

The Cost of International Adoption

Without the government subsidies available for domestic adoption, international adoption is significantly more expensive in the United States. There are other sources of support, such as religious associations or employee benefits through many companies, but the cost of international adoption ranges from $15,000 to $40,000 for each applicant (European Adoption

Consultants, 2007). A few countries, such as Russia, decrease the cost of adoption for older children or special needs children, but there are extra costs associated with raising those children. Other countries, such as China, have lower fees but require longer visits, which increases the total cost (European Adoption Consultants, 2007). This can make international adoption prohibitively expensive for many. Therefore it has a positive impact on the number of domestic adoptions, but also increases the visibility of international adoption. Typically, adults or couples financially capable of adopting internationally live in higher and more visible socio-economic strata. Celebrities who adopt internationally (in France and Belgium as well as the United States) are examples of this. This may explain why international adoption is perceived as more common than it is.

In France and Belgium, the impact of the cost of international adoption is offset by shorter traveling distances, family allowances, and the absence of a strong domestic adoption system. Additionally, the Euro is stronger than the dollar at the moment, so the cost is slightly less. For many prospective parents in these countries, international adoption is the only viable option, and cost is not as important a factor as it is in the United States, so there is no dampening effect on the number of international adoptions in those countries.

Open versus Closed Adoptions

As with cost-related factors, the openness of international adoptions has very little effect on French and Belgian adoption because all adoptions that are finalized or recognized in those countries are closed. Thus, even if a country allowed open adoptions, it would be overridden by the national laws of France and Belgium. However, there is an aspect of openness inherent in many international adoptions because of interracial adoptions. One cannot tell a child of a different race than the rest of their family that they were not adopted, nor would anybody believe

it. As a result international adoptions in France and Belgium are more closed (if France and Belgium ever open adoption records, children adopted internationally would still have to wait until their native countries also opened adoption records) in a legal sense and more open in a social sense.

In the United States, where there are varying levels of openness offered in adoption, the closed nature of international adoptions can be intimidating to potential parents. Some potential parents misunderstand the term "closed" as it pertains to international adoption and believe that it means the identity of the biological parents is unknown or unknowable. This too discourages future parents from adopting internationally because Americans are accustomed to being highly informed. Four people with whom I talked in the United States thought that international adoptions were "secret" so that baby markets could be concealed from adoptants. The positive characteristic of this discouragement is that it may push more people to adopt domestically.

In contrast, some parents may find the closed nature of international adoption relieving. I have heard prospective parents at international adoption seminars express fears of their adopted child's parents re-entering their lives in a domestic adoption (which is legally impossible without the adoptive parent's consent, but the fear exists nonetheless), and satisfaction that such a situation could not happen in an international adoption. This almost counterbalances the negative perception of closed international adoptions and increases the number of children adopted internationally. Overall, the openness of international adoptions has a negative effect on the number of international adoptions because Americans' need for choice and information is stronger than the fear of undesired contact with the child's biological family.

Local Public Opinion

In Belgium and France I spent a lot of time discussing and researching immigration and racism. The reason for this was because both countries' adoption programs are primarily comprised of international adoptions, and the way that foreigners are treated could be indicative of the manner in which foreign-born children are regarded. Also, since the family is a microcosm of society, and adoption is in essence the immigration of a child into a family, the acceptance of immigration by the public will most likely be reflected in the way that a family accepts the arrival of an adopted child. Since public opinion about international adoption is as non-existent as opinion about domestic adoption, I studied how the public reacts to immigration. Additionally, when adopted children become adults they will be judged not as an adopted child but as a native-born foreigner.

Through interviews and books I found that Belgians, at least those in Brussels, are accepting of immigrants. They have a recent history of racial intolerance, but I attribute that to a natural reaction to an influx of immigrants. Today the social climate is one of acceptance, at least of other nationalities. The main tensions in Belgium are between the language communities, which does not affect international adoptions, and against Muslims, which does not affect international adoptions either as countries governed by Islamic law do not allow their children to be adopted by non-Muslim countries (Service Public Fédéral, 2007).

During my interview with the director of l'Autorité Centrale Fédérale, Service de l'Adoption Internationale (SAI – Central Federal Authority, International Adoption Bureau) she described potential parents as mean. According to her they are greedy, closed-minded, and are less interested in the children they are adopting than finalizing the process of adoption. Personally, I find this to be the polar opposite of most descriptions of adoptive parents. I believe

that she only meets parents who are going through the last step of many in a long legal process before they are allowed to meet their child and are frustrated with the adoption experience when they meet her. Their exasperation with the detailed paperwork and close scrutiny to which they are subjected may make them come across as mean. Other interviews and conversations in Belgium confirmed my suspicions that parents who have adopted internationally are usually open-minded, generous, loving, and intelligent people. Overall, Belgium nurtures a supportive environment for international adoptions, and this trend should continue indefinitely.

France's stance on immigration and racism is closer to that of the United States than Belgium at the current time. The French are historically proud and protective of being French. However, the government today has an official policy of acceptance and integration of immigrants. Privately, most people that I conversed with felt that racism was not a problem in France. One woman, who worked at an international adoption agency, said that racism absolutely exists in France and that those who disagree are not in touch with reality. She had a unique perspective because her children were ethnically different from each other. All other discourses I had were about families where the children may come from a different ethnic background than the parents, but have the same ethnicity as their siblings. The woman I interviewed said that her biological children were never stopped by the police in a "routine" identification check whereas her adopted children from Haiti and Djibouti were often stopped. She believes that this is an example of racism in France. I agree with her opinion and think that racism in France is very similar to racism in the United States, that is to say that while traditional racism exists, the more prevalent prejudices are socio-economical. That is to say that the only politically correct prejudices are against those of differing social classes. In both countries, however, socio-economic lines also expose racial inequality. This is manifested in racism

against African-Americans and, increasingly, Hispanics in the United States, and North African immigrants in France. Thus, both countries veil their racist tendencies as social and economic prejudices. This may be why every other interview denied the existence of racism in France. There were hints that biases against foreigners existed, such as the father who said that his adopted children's grandchildren would be the first generation to be considered truly French, but no open admissions of racism.

Expressly concerning international adoption, the French seem to be very accepting. As one interviewer put it, "no matter where they come from, all babies are precious and loved". This encourages infant adoption, but may also prevent the adoption of older children. Opinion of adoption also depends on the child's country of origin. France is welcoming to immigrants and adopted children that may be able to assist the country's development as adults, but is wary of groups that it feels are over-represented at the lowest economic level. This is because, like Americans, the French do not believe in giving welfare to those without work, but also tend to ignore the conditions that keep certain groups out of employment. Therefore, children from "acceptable" countries will most likely never feel discriminated against regardless of their adoptive family, while children from "unacceptable" countries are more likely to be victims of prejudice. This has an effect on the number of children adopted from particular countries rather than the total number of international adoptions. The number of children adopted from Asia has increased in recent years, while the number of children adopted from Europe and the Americas has remained the same. Africa was the only continent to see a decline in the number of children adopted between 2005 and 2006 (Mairie de Paris, 2003).

Americans, like the French, are covertly racist, but it is hidden beneath a façade of socio-economic division. The positive side of this type of bias is that adopted children are more likely

to be judged in the same way as their adoptive parents, and when they become adults they will be able to identify with a class of society as opposed to an ethnic background. However, because America is an immigrant country, there is racism coming from every cultural group, not just WASPs (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants). This creates an interesting dynamic where a multi-cultural family feels the support and opposition of each contributing culture. Take for example an African-American man and an Irish-American woman. The man may enjoy the support of his culture and community, but will at the same time see his wife condemned by the same people who support him. The reverse is true for the woman, she will be supported individually, but not as a part of a mixed couple. Although interracial families are slowly becoming more commonplace, they are still the exception and not the rule.

Additionally, Americans are able to adopt from their own ancestral countries through international adoption, which is not possible in France or Belgium. This also decreases the number of interracial adoptions in the United States without decreasing the number of international adoptions.

Opinions concerning international adoption were far more common than opinions on domestic adoption among the people with whom I spoke. Every person I questioned supported international adoption and believed that it was a morally good thing to do because it helped a child in need. With certain people I was able to have a longer conversation, and when I informed them of the number of adoptable children in the United States, every person was shocked. They assumed that Americans adopted American children first and foreign children second. There were also many people who noted the prevalence of children adopted from China and Korea. This sentiment comes from the inherent visibility of many international adoptions. For example, one woman who presented at an adoption seminar in Columbus had three sons, and they, her

husband, and herself all had blond hair and green or blue eyes. Their daughter, who was seven years younger than their youngest biological son, was from Guatemala and had dark brown hair, dark brown eyes, and a darker complexion. The adoptive mother noted that she had been asked by several people if she was baby-sitting, if she knew that a child was following her (apparently some people could not fathom that the daughter would be part of their family), or where her husband was from if she was seen alone with her daughter. One of the results of the visibility of interracial adoptions, as international adoptions are wont to be, is that people feel entitled to comment on the family. One agency I spoke with offered books with suggestions for how to deal with rude questions, such as "How much did your child cost?" or "Do you have any real children?". This is indicative of Americans' attitudes towards adoption as an alternative option. Despite these rude questions, most Americans who have met with me have said that they support international adoption to the extent that they would consider it in the future.

Global Opinion: Neocolonialism

While a country's opinion of adoption is important when a child is adopted, the child's native country's opinion is crucial for permitting the adoption. France and Belgium, having both ratified the Hague Convention, are viewed as reputable places for a child to be adopted into. The only questions concerning France and Belgium's international adoption programs by the global community are centered on their preference for ex-colonies. Adoption in this instance is seen as neo-colonialism, where the historical imperial centers are stretching their hands out again to their colonies and grasping one of the few resources left to them: their children. There is a fear of brain drain, but the more important fear is that the colonies will lose their culture and their future by surrendering all their children. There is less fear that France or Belgium will subsume all the children of a particular culture, and significantly more fear that America will adopt "too many"

children, although there is no consensus on how many children is “too many”. However, this fear has resulted in a decrease of the number of adoptions allowed from a particular country.

The United States has a far more negative global image than either France or Belgium, and this has a detrimental effect on international adoptions conducted by Americans. In France and Belgium, many of my interviewees and conversation partners saw the United States as desirous of ruling as much of the world as possible. Their opinion is shared almost globally, as many Americans are constantly warned before traveling abroad. This is why international adoption by the United States is categorized as neo-colonialism despite a lack of an imperial history. In this instance, “neo” does not signify a new historical wave but rather an entirely new method.

Being labeled as a neo-colonialist and power-hungry nation has had a deleterious effect on the quota of children allowed to be adopted by the United States. As mentioned earlier, many countries including Russia, China, Guatemala, and Vietnam are re-evaluating their adoption policies towards the United States. China has instated certain regulations that are designed to protect their children, but in reality only further limit the number of Americans who may adopt. For example, only married couples between the ages of 30 and 50, and with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of lower than forty, are allowed to adopt children from China as of the summer of 2007 (china-ccaa.org). However, the United States will be conforming to the Hague Convention standards in April of 2008, and it will be interesting to see if and how global opinions towards adoption by Americans changes. I believe that as long as the United States is viewed unfavorably, the world’s opinion of the American adoption program will not be able to improve

greatly. However, Americans' opinion of their own adoption system is high enough such that more international adoptions are undertaken by the United States than by any other country[8].

Child Trafficking

Accidentally adopting children who have been stolen or bought from their birth mothers is a fear of potential parents in France, Belgium, and the United States. Each adoption story that I have read from France or Belgium mentions a child being exposed as stolen or bought at least once, and Americans are the most common perpetrators. Even in the American media, such crimes are typically committed by Americans. In January of 2008, "Dateline" had a show dedicated to "the dark side" of adoption in Guatemala where kidnapped children were passed off as orphans. I find it interesting that Americans are willing to accept their responsibility in the situation, and are attempting to address it by re-evaluating local agencies and lawyers in foreign countries. The French and Belgians are far more willing to lay all the blame with Americans, and cannot accept that they may have accidentally done the same thing. I foresee child trafficking becoming less prevalent as more countries become signatories to the Hague Convention and restructure their adoption programs. It will never be completely eradicated, but countries at both ends of the adoption process are making efforts to protect the children (Hague Convention, 2008).

[8] For a list of the countries who adopt the most children internationally, please see Appendix D.

Conclusions

I set out to analyze what distinctions exist between the French, Belgian, and American systems of adoption and why they exist. Through the research process, I have found that the French and Belgians adopt all of their adoptable native children each year, but that number is incredibly small compared to the United States. I believe that this is due to smaller populations, different government methods of supporting families, dissimilar population growth rates, opposing foster care systems, divergent opinions and use of abortion and contraception, contrasting types of adoption, and diverse public opinions concerning adoption, fostering, relinquishment, and the family. Additionally, the French and Belgians adopt independently, which I have found is due to social norms, a tradition of independent adoptions, and the lack of government involvement in adoption which is contrary to the American method of adopting. Lastly, I have noticed that the United States adopts more children internationally than any other country, but France adopts more foreign-born children per person than any other country. The differences in the adoption programs are due to inconsistent foreign adoption laws, the high cost of international adoption, discrepant local public opinion of adoption and immigration, and global public perception of adoption between France, Belgium, and the United States. This is only a short list of the differences between the three systems of adoption, but it does highlight the most interesting and influential inconsistencies among the systems.

Recommendations

As all French and Belgian adoptable children each year are placed with permanent families, there is little need for reform in those systems. Some suggested improvements would include promoting adoption awareness or opening adoption records. However, promoting

adoption awareness would simply widen the community of adoptants without changing the rate or number of adoptions. Opening the adoption records may have no effect on adoption in France because of the taboo against discussing personal family life.

In contrast, the United States does have room to improve its adoption program. Three major improvements I would suggest are organizing agencies, coordinating state laws, and streamlining the process. Organizing agencies, public and private, would allow potential parents to adopt from different states more easily, add an aspect of transparency to the process, and would permit agencies to learn from, rather than compete with, one another. This would also require changes in agencies' funding formulas so that they would not be in direct competition with other agencies. Although this would be difficult, it would end the perception of adoption as a commercial enterprise. Additionally, it would create an adoption infrastructure capable of collecting information for all domestic adoptions, educating workers, enlightening the public about adoption (including highlighting the grants and loans available for adoption), and offering a single curriculum for potential parents to follow throughout the adoption process and afterwards. Coordinating state laws would let agencies throughout the country work more easily with one another, as they may be more apt to do if the agencies were organized, and decrease the confusion involved in interstate adoptions. Lastly, streamlining the process would encourage more parents to adopt domestically. If many of the unknowns, such as the birth mother's decision to adopt, the length of the wait for a domestic adoption, or the necessity of fostering, could be clarified the public would be more willing to invest their personal time and effort into adopting. Streamlining does not, nor should it, involve making the selection process of potential parents less stringent. Instead it should focus on finding the most important aspects of the

adoption process, emphasizing them, and searching for ways to remove repetitive or useless tasks.

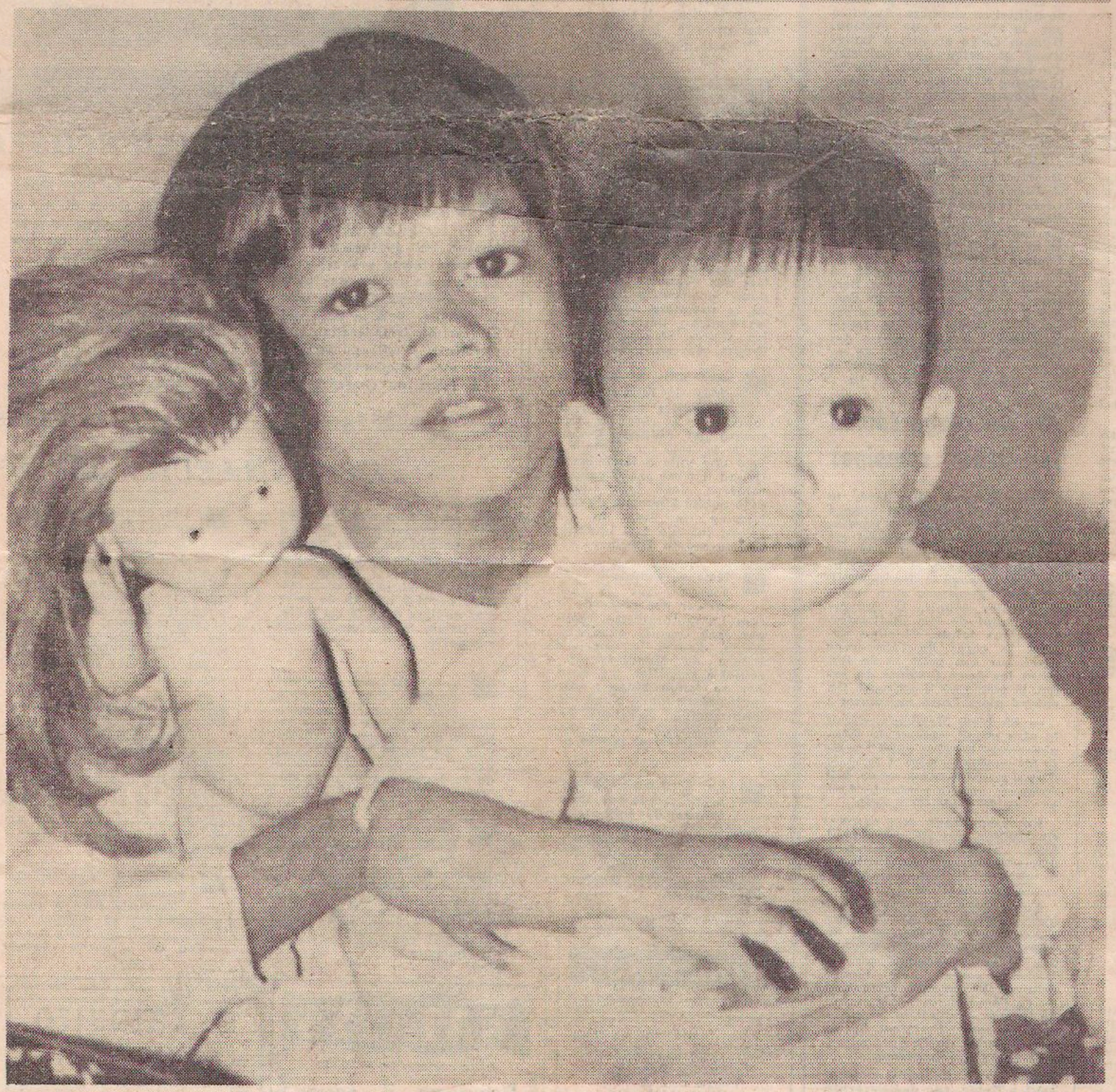
Areas for Future Study

Future studies on the subject of adoption could include an analysis of the psychological fitness of adopted children in various countries and situations, the social integration of adopted children, or religious influences on adoption. Adoption is a multidisciplinary subject encompassing history, politics, social work, sociology, psychology, development studies, and religious studies among others. Therefore it is impossible to list all potential research projects that could be prepared on adoption. However it is adoption's multidisciplinary traits that render it interesting to so many people.

Limitations

During my research I was limited in funds and time. I was awarded two scholarships from the Honors Arts and Sciences Research Foundation, but travel to Europe during the summer months is always expensive. Additionally, both France and Belgium are known for extended summer vacations; often workers take the entire month of August off for vacation. This made it difficult to meet with a great number of people as they were not all available. Unfortunately this was the only time the research could be completed. I did manage to secure enough interviews for this thesis, but a great many more would be required for a Master's Thesis, for example.

Ces deux orphelins vietnamiens adoptés par des familles françaises ne savent pas encore sourire



Deux familles françaises ont adopté ces orphelins vietnamiens qui ne savent plus sourire : Tran Thi Lan, une fille de huit ans, et Le Van Lai, un garçon de dix-huit mois.

Arrivés en France depuis quelques jours, ils n'ont pu passer les fêtes de Noël et du Jour de l'An avec leurs parents adoptifs. Leur pitoyable état de santé a nécessité une mise en quarantaine à la clinique d'enfants de Hyères.

(PAGE 3, NOTRE REPORTAGE)

Les canons U.S. tiraient à bout portant

En effet le Vietcong a réussi à pénétrer à l'intérieur du périmètre de défense, malgré des pertes très lourdes. Et à plusricains alors que le Vietcong a perdu de 75 à 150 hommes. De fait, selon les premiers récits, de « nombreux cadavres » gisent sur le terrain.

Les Américains annoncent avoir repoussé les assaillants. Mais le sort de la base de Dau Tieng a été longtemps indécis.

Traumatisés par la guerre physiquement épuisés, ils doivent être soignés

(Enquête de Roger COLOMBANI à Hyères, Jean COUSSY à Libourne et André CULOT à Toulouse.)

« ILS ont vu leurs parents mourir sous les bombes... La petite fille tremble de tous ses membres chaque fois qu'un avion survole la clinique. Quant au petit garçon, il a hurlé trois jours durant après son admission ici... », révèle une infirmière.

La petite fille, le petit garçon, ce sont deux orphelins vietnamiens adoptés par des familles françaises et qui viennent d'arriver chez nous. Tran Thi Lan, la fille, a 8 ans, et Le Van Lai, le garçon, 18 mois. Ils sont actuellement en quarantaine au lazaret de la clinique pédiatrique de Hyères (Var).

L'un et l'autre sont dans un état physique lamentable. La petite fille atteint à peine le poids d'une enfant de 5 ans. Le petit garçon, lui, a l'apparence d'un bébé de 7 à 8 mois.

Aussi, pendant plusieurs semaines, les pédiatres hyérois vont-ils s'efforcer de leur rendre la santé. Ce n'est qu'après avoir subi de nombreux examens de la gorge, des poumons, des yeux, de la peau (pour rechercher les parasites) qu'ils s ront remis à leurs familles adoptives.

La tâche de celles-ci sera délicate : ces enfants, profondément traumatisés par d'affreux souvenirs, qui n'ont connu que la guerre, ne savent plus sourire. Ont-ils jamais su d'ailleurs ? Figés dans un muet désespoir, ils jettent sur l'univers heureux qui sera désormais le leur des regards pleins d'effroi.

« Accepte mon orpheline »

Rien ne les apaise encore : ni l'arbre de Noël qu'ils ont vu pour la première fois derrière les vitres de leur chambre, ni les bonbons, ni les jouets dont ils ont été comblés. Cependant, Tran, la petite fille, ne veut plus quitter la poupée blonde qu'elle a reçue.

Mais elle ne sait pas, elle ne saura sans doute jamais, qu'elle est la cause d'un drame. Pour l'adopter, Anne-Marie Couturier, 39 ans, professeur de français au collège d'enseignement technique de Libourne (Gironde), a rompu avec l'être qu'elle aimait le plus : sa mère.

— Je ne suis pas raciste, explique Mme veuve Couturier, institutrice en retraite de 74 ans, grand-mère de dix petits enfants, mais je suis contre l'adoption. Lorsque l'enfant est en âge de comprendre, il est souvent désemparé en apprenant la vérité. Ma fille, Anne-Marie, a pris ses responsabilités. Qu'elle les supporte seule.

Dans une très belle lettre, Anne-Marie Couturier avait tenté, la semaine dernière, auprès de sa mère, une ultime et pathétique démarche. Elle écrivait notamment :

« Crois-tu que je pourrai l'aimer plus que toi ? Jusqu'ici, j'ai donné de l'argent pour les enfants déshérités. Mais cela ne suffit pas. Il y a trop d'orphelins sur la terre. Imagine que les nôtres aient été pris dans cette tourmente... Je ne te demande pas d'aimer ma petite orpheline, je te demande seulement de l'accepter. »

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Une consolation toutefois pour Anne-Marie : sa sœur, religieuse à Rennes, et ses trois frères lui ont dit qu'ils se réjouissaient de voir leur famille s'agrandir.

« Il sera notre fils »

Les choses ont été plus faciles chez M. et Mme Marty, de Fenouillet, près de Toulouse (Haute-Garonne), qui ont adopté Le Van Lai, le petit garçon.

René et Claude Marty, 42 et 38 ans, ont déjà une fille de 13 ans, Josseline, qui attend avec impatience ce petit frère tombé du ciel. René Marty est dessinateur à l'usine Saint-Gobain.

C'est en lisant dans un hebdomadaire un appel de « Terre des hommes », mouvement apolitique en faveur des enfants malheureux dont le siège est au Pradet, près de Toulon, que Mme Marty décida d'adopter un orphelin.

— Il fut un moment question de nous confier un petit Sénégalais, raconte son mari, mais c'est un Vietnamien dont nous sommes chargés. C'est sans importance. Nous l'éduquerons comme notre propre fils, bien qu'il ne s'agisse pas d'une adoption légale, mais d'un accueil à vie.

Grâce à l'action de « Terre des hommes », dont le directeur se nomme M. Ferragut, d'autres orphelins de toutes races rejoindront Tran Thi Lan et Le Van Lai en France au cours des prochains mois.

Deux familles françaises ont adop
miens qui ne savent plus sourire :
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Arrivés en France depuis quelq
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quarantaine à la clinique d'enfants d

(PAGE 3, NOTRE REPO

Questionnaire for Agency Workers

This questionnaire consists of four types of questions; short answer, multiple-choice, true/false, and rating questions. You are NOT required to answer every question. Only answer those questions that you feel comfortable answering. You may also stop the questionnaire at any point. Please do not include your name, address, age, or any contact information to keep this questionnaire anonymous. The information obtained here will be used anonymously in a research thesis. For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact me by email at lammers.57@osu.edu. For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251. By filling out this questionnaire, you are demonstrating that you understand these conditions and consent to them. Thank you very much for participating, I really appreciate your time.

How long have you worked for this agency?

In what capacity do you serve this agency?

How long ago did you become interested in adoption?

What was the catalyst for your interest in adoption as a career choice?

How many clients do you see on a daily basis?

How many of your co-workers do you see on a daily basis?

How many hours per day do you work, on average?

How many hours per day do spend on paperwork (i.e. data entry, filing, receipts), on average?

How many hours per day do you spend in contact with clients (i.e. phone calls, directo contact, written communication), on average?

How do you spend the rest of your work time, typically?

How many days per week do you work, on average?

Is this your only job?

If no, what else do you do?

Did you receive training (including, but not limited to, a specialized college degree) for your work?

If yes, what was it, and when and where did you receive this training?

Do you work with parents…? (Please check one)

On a daily basis
Once or twice a week
Once or twice a month
Rarely
Never/only accidentally

Do you work with other agency workers…? (Please check one)

On a daily basis
Once or twice a week
Once or twice a month
Rarely
Never/only accidentally

Do you work with the local community (in community outreach groups, advertising, consulting)…? (Please check one)

On a daily basis
Once or twice a week
Once or twice a month
Rarely
Never/only accidentally

How often do you work with cultures (for purposes of this study, cultures are defined as groups that are distinguished by one or more of the following: language, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, origin, and tradition) different than your own? (Please circle one)

On a daily basis
Once or twice a week
Once or twice a month
Rarely
Never/only accidentally

What percentage of your time at work do you spend working with the following people?

_____Parents
_____Children
_____Community groups
_____Other agency workers
_____Government officials/lawmakers
_____Lawyers/attorneys

What percentage of your time at work do you spend working with/in the following areas?

_____Domestic adoption
_____International adoption
_____Foster care
_____Child welfare
_____Child placement
_____Other agencies

You find the local community supportive of your work. (Please circle one)

True
False

You are discriminated against because of your work. (Please circle one)

True
False

You feel that what you do is socially worthwhile. (Please circle one)

True
False

You have become more involved in the local community as a result of your work. (Please circle one)

True
False

You have become less involved with the local community because of your work. (Please circle one)

True
False

The local community has become more supportive of your work over the years that you have worked there. (Please circle one)

True
False

You live in a culturally (as previously defined) diverse environment. (Please circle one)

True
False

You enjoy learning about backgrounds different from your own. (Please circle one)

True
False

You have adopted or are in the process of adopting a child or multiple children. (Please circle one)

True
False

You have a child or children that were not adopted. (Please circle one)

True
False

You have recommended adoption to a friend or family member, regardless of whether or not they chose to. (Please circle one)

True
False

To what extent does the community financially support the agency (i.e. fundraisers, donations, etc.)? (Please circle the most appropriate response with 1 being not at all and 10 being almost full financial support for the agency)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How would you rate your satisfaction concerning the way your work is perceived by others outside the agency? (Please circle the most appropriate response with 1 being not at all satisfied and 10 being completely satisfied)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How important is it to you to learn about different cultures, languages, and traditions? (Please circle the most appropriate response with 1 being of no importance at all and 10 being of the utmost importance)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How important is it to you to teach others (either directly or indirectly) about other cultures, languages, and traditions? (Please circle the most appropriate response with 1 being of no importance and 10 being of the utmost importance)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How culturally diverse is your living environment (include community, family, and work place)? (Please circle the most appropriate response with 1 being culturally homogenous and 10 being a mélange of more cultures than you can count)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Questionnaires for Parents

This questionnaire is for research purposes, and will remain anonymous. Your responses will not be seen by any person but myself except in aggregate form (i.e. in charts, data lists, etc.) There are some questions that may seem very personal concerning your reasons for adopting or considering adoption. They will be located in a separate section at the end of the questionnaire. You are NOT required to answer these questions, or any questions that you are not comfortable with. You may also stop filling out the questionnaire at any point. Also, at the bottom of the questionnaire you will find contact information for support groups to contact if you so desire. Please tear off that part of the page or copy the information down. For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact me by email at lammers.57@osu.edu. For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251. There are four types of questions; short answer, multiple-choice, true and false, and rating questions. Since your responses will need to be anonymous please do not put your name, age, address, or any contact information. Also, to retain anonymity, if you find a question that would identify you, please do not answer it. By filling out this questionnaire you are indicating consent to these conditions. Thank you very much for participating, I really appreciate your time.

How long have you worked with this agency on your current inquiry?

Have you worked with this agency before on either an inquiry or a completed adoption?

If yes, when?

Why did you choose this agency?

Have you worked with a different agency before?

If so, which one, and when did you work with them?

What is your occupation?

Do you work full or part time?

Do you belong to any community groups? Please specify.

How many children (biological, step-, and adopted) do you have?

How many siblings (include adopted siblings, step-siblings, and half-siblings) do you have?

If you have a partner, how many siblings (include adopted siblings, step-siblings, and half-siblings) do they have?

Please describe your living situation (Circle as many as apply)

Living alone
Living with mother/father/sister/brother
Living with partner/spouse
Living with children (your own or someone else's)
Living with friends
Living with someone of a different culture than your own
In a temporary living situation
In a permanent living situation

How many cultures (for purposes of this study a culture is defined as a group that is distinguished by one or more of the following: religion, ethnicity, origin, language, tradition, or socioeconomic status) do you actively belonging to? (Please circle one)

One
Two or three
Four or five
Six or seven
Eight or nine
Ten or more
Don't distinguish yourself by culture

How many cultures (as previously defined) does your family actively belong to? (Please circle one)

One
Two or three
Four or five
Six or seven
Eight or nine
Ten or more
Don't distinguish themselves by culture

How many cultures do your friends actively belong to? (Please circle one)

One
Two or three
Four or five
Six or seven
Eight or nine
Ten or more
Don't distinguish themselves by culture

How would you describe your interactions with other cultures (as previously defined)? (Please circle as many as apply)

Daily
Once or twice a week
Once or twice a month
Almost never
Try to avoid interaction
Couldn't avoid interaction if you wanted to
Don't know because interactions are so pervasive

Concerning racial/ethnic/cultural differences, you feel that you, your family, and your friends are…? (Please circle as many as apply)

Very open
Open
Hesitant
Polite but distant
Accommodating of differences
Welcoming
Uninterested
Curious

Concerning racial/ethnic/cultural differences, you feel that your community is…? (Please circle as many as apply)

Very open
Open
Hesitant
Polite but distant
Accommodating of differences
Welcoming
Uninterested
Curious

You live in a _____ type of community. (Please circle all that apply)

Rural
Suburban
Urban
Tight-knit
Individualistic
Homogenous
Heterogeneous

It is important to you to incorporate several cultures into your daily life. (Please circle one)

True
False

You feel that you are accepted for who you are in your community. (Please circle one)

True
False

You make an attempt to discover new cultures. (Please circle one)

True
False

You feel that it is your social responsibility to accept all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, cultural, or socioeconomic status. (Please circle one)

True
False

You feel that it is your moral responsibility to accept all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, cultural, or socioeconomic status. (Please circle one)

True
False

You feel that it is your spiritual responsibility to accept all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, cultural, or socioeconomic status. (Please circle one)

True
False

You feel that it is your responsibility as a parent/sibling/friend/community member to accept all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, cultural, or socioeconomic status. (Please circle one)

True
False

How would you rate your personal desire to experience different cultures through their language or traditions? (Please circle the most appropriate response with 1 being not at all desirous and 10 being ready to experience a new culture every day)

NA 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How would you rate your family's/friend's acceptance of other cultures? (Please circle the most appropriate response with 1 being not accepting and 10 being fully incorporating)

NA 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How would you rate your satisfaction with your work? (Please circle the most appropriate response with 1 being entirely dissatisfied and 10 being completely satisfied)

NA 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How would you rate your satisfaction with your home life? (Please circle the most appropriate response with 1 being entirely dissatisfied and 10 being completely satisfied)

NA 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How would you rate your satisfaction with your family? (Please circle the most appropriate response with 1 being entirely dissatisfied and 10 being completely satisfied)

NA 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How would you rate your satisfaction with your friends? (Please circle the most appropriate response with 1 being entirely dissatisfied and 10 being completely satisfied)

NA 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How would you rate your satisfaction with yourself? (Please circle the most appropriate response with 1 being entirely dissatisfied and 10 being completely satisfied)

NA 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How important is it to you to teach children, regardless of whether or not they are your own, to respect different cultures? (Please circle the most appropriate response with 1 being of no importance at all to 10 being of the utmost importance)

NA 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How important of an issue do you think adoption (both domestic and international) is? (Please circle them most appropriate response with 1 being unimportant and 10 being of the utmost importance)

NA 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How important of an issue do you think your community perceives adoption to be? (Please circle them most appropriate response with 1 being unimportant and 10 being of the utmost importance)

NA 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How important of an issue do you think the French population perceives adoption to be? (Please circle them most appropriate response with 1 being unimportant and 10 being of the utmost importance)

NA 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Questions concerning personal experiences with adoption

How many children have you adopted or are you in the process of adopting?

Why did you decide to adopt a child?

When did you decide to adopt a child?

What made you make this decision?

Would you make the same decision again?

Was/Is it important to you to adopt a child who physically looks like you?

Was/Is it important to you to adopt a child who is from the same culture (as previously defined) as yourself? Why or why not?

Was the choice to adopt domestically versus internationally important to you?

If so, which one did you choose and why?

Will you tell/Have you told your children about adoption?

Why or why not?

Where you adopted?

How has your family felt about the adoption process? (Please circle as many as apply)

Accepting, but would rather you hadn't gone through the process
Accepting, but would rather you had adopted a different child
Completely accepting, but slightly distance because of necessity (physical distance, own problems, etc.)
Completely accepting
Financially supportive
Emotionally supportive
Supportive with all of their available means
Unsupportive because of unavailability of means
Unsupportive
Uncomprehending
Disapproving
Disapproved at first, but approve now
Couldn't be happier
Couldn't be more disappointed
Have experienced it themselves
Haven't taken a stance as of yet
Don't know yet (if this is true, please circle anticipated results)

How have your friends felt about the adoption process? (Please circle as many results as apply)

Accepting, but would rather you hadn't gone through the process
Accepting, but would rather you had adopted a different child
Completely accepting, but slightly distance because of necessity (physical distance, own problems, etc.)
Completely accepting
Financially supportive
Emotionally supportive
Supportive with all of their available means
Unsupportive because of unavailability of means
Unsupportive
Uncomprehending
Disapproving
Disapproved at first, but approve now
Couldn't be happier
Couldn't be more disappointed
Have experienced it themselves
Haven't taken a stance as of yet
Don't know yet (if this is true, please circle anticipated results)

Which of the following views does your culture take concerning adoption? (Please circle all that apply)

Adoption is sometimes the best choice for a child
It's best for children to be raised by their parents' next of kin if parents are unable
It's best for children to be raised by the most loving family possible
Children are a blessing, no matter what form they arrive in
Protection of children, including through adoption, is of the utmost importance
Adoption should only be used as a last resort
It's better for a child to be raised parentless in a community of their own culture than by strangers
Children should be placed into families only of their own culture
Children should be placed into families that will love and support them
Children should be placed regardless of culture
Children should be placed into families of differing cultures

What are your personal views about adoption? (Please circle all that apply)

Adoption is sometimes the best choice for a child
It's best for children to be raised by their parents' next of kin if parents are unable
It's best for children to be raised by the most loving family possible
Children are a blessing, no matter what form they arrive in
Protection of children, including through adoption, is of the utmost importance
Adoption should only be used as a last resort
It's better for a child to be raised parentless in a community of their own culture than by strangers
Children should be placed into families only of their own culture
Children should be placed into families that will love and support them
Children should be placed regardless of culture
Children should be placed into families of differing cultures

How would you rate your family's support of your choice to adopt? (Please circle the most appropriate answer with 1 being completely unsupportive and 10 being fully supportive)

NA 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How would you rate your friends' support of your choice to adopt? (Please circle the most appropriate answer with 1 being completely unsupportive and 10 being fully supportive)

NA 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How would you rate your community's support of your choice to adopt? (Please circle the most appropriate answer with 1 being completely unsupportive and 10 being fully supportive)

NA 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How would you rate your culture's support of your choice to adopt? (Please circle the most appropriate answer with 1 being completely unsupportive and 10 being fully supportive)

NA 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Living Arrangements of Children: 2004

Household Economic Studies

Issued February 2008

P70-114

Current Population Reports

By
Rose M. Kreider

Highlights

This report provides a detailed overview of children's living arrangements in the United States in 2004. Data in the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) that allow the identification of detailed relationships among all household members show a variety of living arrangements for children by their race and Hispanic origin, by the number of parents with whom they live, and other characteristics.

In 2004, 73.2 million children under age 18 lived in American households. The majority of these children (70 percent) lived with two parents. Most (87 percent) of the children who lived with two parents lived with their biological mother and father. Twenty-six percent of all children (19.3 million) lived with one parent. The majority (88 percent) of these children lived with their mother.

The number of parents children lived with varied by race and Hispanic origin—87 percent of Asian children lived with two parents, as did 38 percent of Black children. While 1 percent of White non-Hispanic children lived with their grandparents with no parent present, this was true for 5 percent of Black children.

Overall, 94 percent of children lived with at least one biological parent, while 8 percent lived with at least one stepparent and 2 percent lived with at least one adoptive parent.

From the point of view of the parents, 30.2 million fathers had their children under age 18 living with them, while 37.8 million mothers lived with at least one of their children under age 18. A higher percentage of the mothers lived with their biological children (94 percent) than did the fathers (85 percent). A higher percentage of fathers than mothers lived with their stepchildren or adopted children.

Children are defined in this report as all noninstitutionalized individuals under 18 years old.

Adopted children are identified by the survey respondent alone and not from any administrative records.

Stepchildren are identified by the survey respondent and their stepparent may not be currently married to the child's other coresidential parent.

Stepsiblings share a parent, but that parent is the biological parent of one child and the stepparent of the other child.

Foster children are only identified in the relationship to householder item and not via the edited variables that identify if the child's mother/father is present in the household and whether the mother/father is the child's biological, step, or adoptive parent.

Half siblings share one biological parent.

U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

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Most children lived with at least one sibling (79 percent). The majority (64 percent) lived with one or two siblings, while 5 percent lived with four or more siblings. Twelve percent of children under age 18 lived with at least one half sibling.

The presence of a half sibling resulted in the creation of a blended family for half (49 percent) of the children in blended families. Seventeen percent of all children under age 18 (12.2 million) lived in blended families. Forty-six percent of the children in blended families, or 5.5 million, lived with at least one stepparent.

About 6.5 million children lived with at least one grandparent, and 1.6 million of these children had no parent present. Children living with grandparents were more often living in families in poverty than were children living in households with no grandparents present (22 percent and 17 percent, respectively). Among children living with their mother only, those living in households with a grandparent present were in poverty 23 percent of the time, lower than the percentage of children living with a single mother and no grandparent present (39 percent).

Approximately 2.2 million children were living with a mother who had a marital event in the year prior to the survey date. About 1.1 million children were living with a parent who had experienced a divorce in the last year.

At the household level, 40.0 million households included children under 18—95 percent had at least one child and his or her biological parent, 9 percent had at least one child and his or her stepparent, and 4 percent had at least one child and his or her adoptive parent.

Parents are defined in this report as a mother or father of the child who may be married or unmarried, biological, step, or adoptive.

Unmarried partners are people who are at least 15 years old, who are not currently living with a spouse, and who are sharing a close personal relationship with another adult in the household. This term and its definition were first developed by Arthur J. Norton of the U.S. Census Bureau for use in the 1990 Census of Population.

The partner may or may not be the parent of any children in the household.

Blended families are formed when remarriages occur or when children living in a household share only one or no biological parents. The presence of a stepparent, stepsibling, or half sibling designates a family as blended.

An **extended family household** is a household where a child lives with at least one parent and someone other than a parent or sibling, either relatives or nonrelatives.

Introduction

Children live in a variety of family arrangements that usually reflect the marriage, divorce, and remarriage patterns of their parents. In addition, one-third of children today are born to unmarried mothers and may grow up in single-parent families or spend significant portions of their lives with other relatives or stepparents.[1] This report examines the diversity of children's living arrangements in American households.[2] The data are from the household relationship module of the SIPP collected in 2004 and they update an earlier report based on data from the 2001 SIPP Panel.[3]

Detailed information was obtained on each person's relationship to every other person in the household, permitting the identification of various types of relatives and of parent-child and sibling relationships. This report describes extended family households with relatives and nonrelatives (whose presence may influence a child's development and contribute to the household's economic well-being). It also examines the degree to which children are living in single-parent families or with stepparents, adoptive parents, or no parents while in the care of another relative or a guardian.

The statistics in this report are based on national-level estimates of children and their living situations from June through September

[1] "The Council of Economic Advisers on the Changing American Family," *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 2000, pp. 617–628.

[2] The data in this report were collected from June through September of 2004 in the second wave (interview) of the 2004 Survey of Income and Program Participation. The population represented (the population universe) is the civilian noninstitutionalized population under 18 living in the United States. Detailed tables for this report can be accessed on the U.S. Census Bureau's Web site, <www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/child/la-child.html>.

[3] Rose M. Kreider and Jason Fields, *Living Arrangements of Children: 2001,* Current Population Reports, P70-104, Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005.

2004. The findings pertain to all noninstitutionalized individuals under age 18, regardless of their marital or parental status.

Various factors influence the diversity of children's living arrangements, including parental death, divorce, remarriage, births to unmarried women, cohabitation (of unmarried parents), and multigenerational families. Immigration may also influence the type of household and family in which children grow up (when families provide housing for their immigrant relatives and friends, for instance). This factor is evident in the living arrangements of Hispanic children, and Hispanics constitute a large component of new immigrants to the United States.[4] Cultural factors, demographic characteristics, and family formation patterns underlie differences in current and future family structure.[5]

Children Living With One, Two, or No Parents

In 2004, 70 percent of the 73.2 million children under age 18 lived with two parents, 26 percent lived with one parent, and the remaining 4 percent lived with no parent (see Table 1).[6] Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of all children across the number and type of parents with whom they lived, while Table 1 details living arrangements of children by race groups and Hispanic origin.

A large majority of White non-Hispanic (78 percent) and Asian (87 percent) children lived with two parents, higher than the proportion for Hispanic children (68 percent) and more than twice as high as the proportion for Black children (38 percent).[7] A higher proportion of Black children than White non-Hispanic or Hispanic children lived with one parent in 2004 (54 percent compared with 20 percent and 28 percent, respectively).

In 2004, 5.5 million children lived with at least one stepparent. In addition, 2.9 million lived with no parents; this figure included 308,000 children living with one or more foster parents. Over half (56 percent) of the children living with no parents were living with grandparents. This proportion also varied by race and Hispanic origin—61 percent of Black children, 57 percent of White non-Hispanic children, and 43 percent of Hispanic children lived with grandparents, of those who had no parents present.[8]

Children Living With Two Parents: Biological, Step, and Adoptive

In 2004, of the 51.0 million children who lived with two parents, 87 percent (44.5 million) lived with their biological mother and biological father (Table 1).[9] An additional 10 percent (5.3 million) lived with a biological parent and a stepparent, usually with a biological mother and a stepfather (4.1 million). About 2 percent of children living with

[4] Because Hispanics may be any race, data in this report for Hispanics overlap with data for the White, Black, and Asian populations. Based on the population under 18 in the 2004 SIPP, 23 percent of the White-alone population, 4 percent of the Black-alone population, and 2 percent of the Asian-alone population were also Hispanic.

Larsen, Luke J. *The Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2003*, Current Population Reports, P20-551, Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2004. Available at <www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/p20-551.pdf>.

[5] S. Philip Morgan et al., "Racial differences in household and family structure at the turn of the century," *American Journal of Sociology,* Vol. 98, January 1993, pp. 798–828.

[6] The estimates in this report (which may be shown in text, figures, and tables) are based on responses of a sample of the population and may differ from the actual values because of sampling variability or other factors. As a result, apparent differences between the estimates for two or more groups may not be statistically significant. All comparative statements have undergone statistical testing and are significant at the 90-percent confidence level unless otherwise noted.

[7] Federal surveys now give respondents the option of reporting more than one race. Therefore, two basic ways of defining a race group are possible. A group such as Asian may be defined as those who reported Asian and no other race (the race-alone or single-race concept) or as those who reported Asian regardless of whether they also reported another race (the race-alone-or-in-combination concept). The body of this report (text, figures, and tables) shows data for people who reported they were the single race White and not Hispanic, those who reported the single race White, those who reported the single race Black, and those who reported the single race Asian. Use of the single-race populations does not imply that it is the preferred method of presenting or analyzing data. The Census Bureau uses a variety of approaches.

For further information, see the Census 2000 Brief *Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin*: 2000 (C2KBR/01-1) at <www.census.gov/population/www/cen2000/briefs.html>. Hispanics may be any race. Data for the American Indian and Alaska Native population are not shown in this report because of their small sample size in the SIPP.

This report will refer to the White-alone population as White, the Black-alone population as Black, the Asian-alone population as Asian, and the White-alone non-Hispanic population as White non-Hispanic.

[8] The percentages of Black children and White non-Hispanic children living with no parents who lived with their grandparents do not differ statistically.

[9] One hundred ninety-three thousand weighted children's records were adjusted where they pointed to two parents, but these parents were not married and were not reported as cohabiting with each other. In the tables, these children are shown as living with cohabiting parents. Eight thousand weighted children's records were adjusted where they pointed to a married parent but pointed to another parent in the household who was not married to the first. These children were made to point to the married parents' spouse as their second parent.

Table 1.
Children by Presence and Type of Parent(s) and Race and Hispanic Origin: 2004

(Numbers in thousands)

Living arrangements	2004									
	Total			Race and Hispanic origin						
	Number	Percent	Margin of error[1]	White alone	White alone, non-Hispanic	Black alone	Asian alone	Hispanic (any race)	2001, total	1996, total
Children	**73,227**			**55,901**	**43,079**	**11,354**	**2,279**	**13,984**	**72,501**	**71,494**
Percent		100.0							100.0	100.0
Living with—										
Two parents[2]	51,013	69.7	0.7	42,469	33,518	4,268	1,987	9,508	70.5	70.9
Married parents	48,787	66.6	0.7	40,893	32,523	3,850	1,952	8,869	67.6	68.8
Unmarried parents	2,227	3.0	0.3	1,576	995	417	35	639	2.9	2.1
Biological mother and father	44,541	60.8	0.8	37,258	29,213	3,537	1,865	8,511	62.2	62.5
Married parents	42,727	58.3	0.8	35,968	28,409	3,198	1,834	7,980	59.7	60.7
Biological mother and stepfather	4,149	5.7	0.4	3,399	2,818	484	31	640	5.6	5.2
Biological father and stepmother	1,106	1.5	0.2	920	734	128	17	196	1.1	1.4
Biological mother and adoptive father	407	0.6	0.1	336	282	25	–	61	0.6	0.7
Biological father and adoptive mother	49	0.1	–	38	38	11	–	–	0.1	0.1
Adoptive mother and father	668	0.9	0.1	457	392	62	67	74	0.8	1.0
Other[3]	95	0.1	–	62	41	21	7	26	0.1	0.0
One parent	19,336	26.4	0.7	11,816	8,496	6,090	250	3,861	25.5	25.4
Mother only	16,973	23.2	0.7	10,037	6,953	5,717	201	3,578	22.5	22.9
Biological	16,574	22.6	0.7	9,829	6,803	5,545	198	3,500	22.0	22.5
Father only	2,363	3.2	0.3	1,779	1,542	373	49	283	3.0	2.6
Biological	2,280	3.1	0.3	1,721	1,494	359	46	273	2.9	2.4
No parent	2,878	3.9	0.3	1,616	1,066	996	43	614	4.0	3.7
Grandparents only	1,598	2.2	0.2	838	603	610	12	263	1.9	1.8
Other relatives only	641	0.9	0.1	328	200	252	12	144	1.2	1.0
Nonrelatives only	558	0.8	0.1	395	230	114	20	184	0.7	0.9
Other arrangement	81	0.1	–	56	33	20	–	23	0.1	0.1
At least 1 biological parent	69,105	94.4	0.4	53,501	41,382	10,090	2,157	13,182	94.5	94.7
At least 1 stepparent	5,532	7.6	0.4	4,499	3,661	691	56	917	7.0	6.9
At least 1 adoptive parent	1,504	2.1	0.2	1,034	880	244	79	187	1.9	2.1
At least 1 foster parent	308	0.4	0.1	231	135	60	4	96	0.4	0.4

– Represents or rounds to zero.

[1] This number, when added to or subtracted from the estimated total number of children under 18 in each category, represents the 90-percent confidence interval around the estimate.

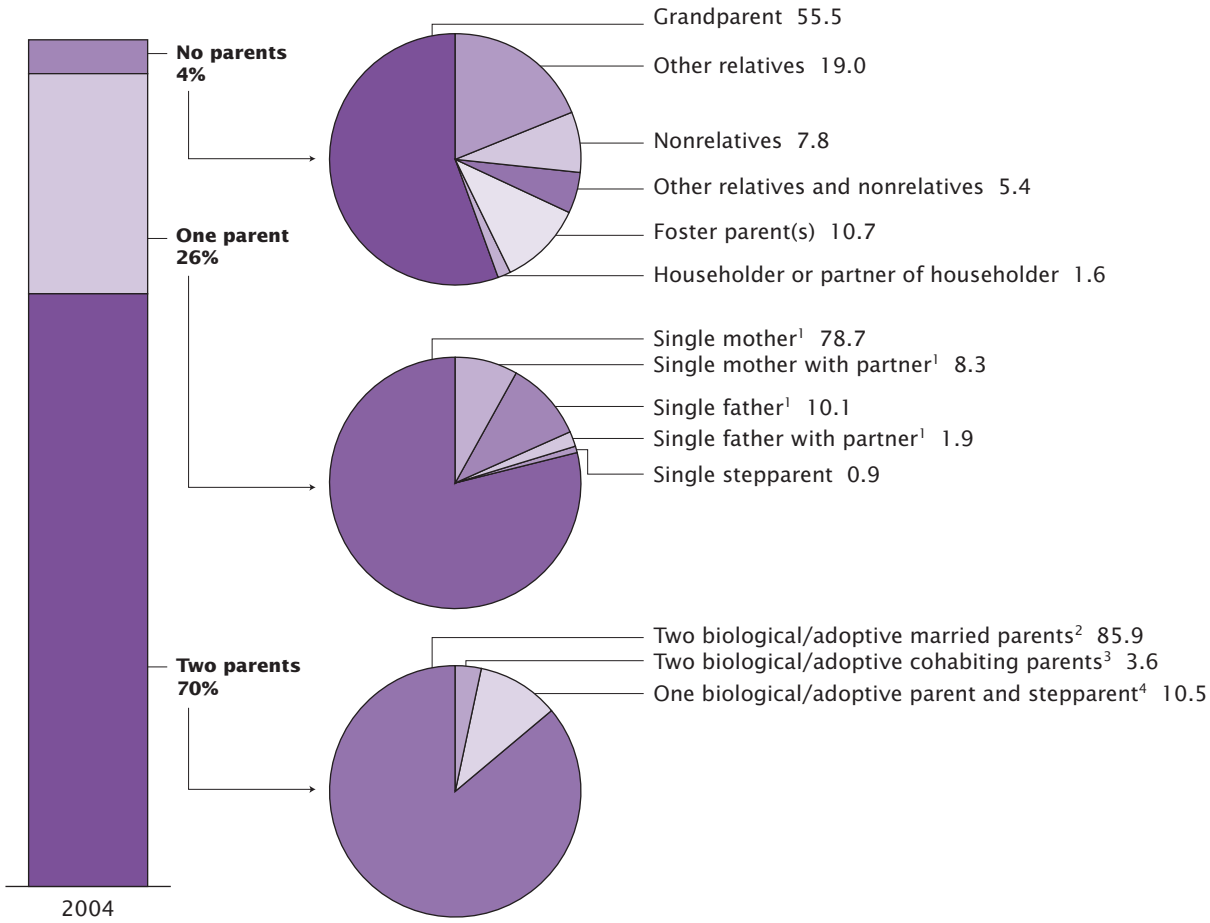
[2] In the SIPP, two coresident parents can be identified regardless of their marital status. This means that both married and unmarried parents are included in this category in this table. This represents a difference from the Current Population Survey (CPS), where, up through 2006, only married parents are recorded in two-parent households. As a result, there are more children in two-parent households in the SIPP and more in single-parent households in the CPS.

[3] Includes children living with one adoptive parent and one stepparent or with two stepparents.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

Figure 1.

Percentage of Children Aged 0–17 Living in Various Family Arrangements: 2004



[1] Child points to one parent, biological or adoptive.
[2] Child points to two parents, who are married to each other—either two biological, two adoptive, or one biological and one adoptive.
[3] Child points to two parents, who are not married to each other—either two biological, two adoptive, or one biological and one adoptive.
[4] Child points to two parents, either married or cohabiting—one is a biological or adoptive parent; one is a stepparent; or both are stepparents.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

two parents (1.2 million) lived with either two adoptive parents or a combination of an adoptive parent and a biological parent or an adoptive parent and a stepparent.[10]

Roughly 1 in 10 children living with two parents lived with a stepparent or adoptive parent. In 2004, 5.7 million children lived with one biological parent and either a stepparent or adoptive parent (11 percent of all those living with two parents). This percentage was statistically unchanged from 11 percent of children living with two parents in 2001 and 10 percent in 1996.

In 2004, 94 percent of Asian children living with two parents lived with both biological parents, higher than any of the other groups shown in Table 1. Black children had the

[10] Estimates from the 2004 panel of the number of children living with adoptive parents and those living with stepparents differ from the 2001 panel estimates for several reasons. In the 2004 panel, if respondents reported that a child was their stepchild, they were also asked whether this child was now also their adopted child. The malfunction of this follow-up question resulted in the need to hold constant the type of relationship between the same child and parent from Wave 1 when the same child and parent were present in Wave 2. The 2001 data were longitudinally edited, and the type of relationship reported in Wave 4, or latest interview during Waves 1 through 4, was used for Waves 1 through 4.

Table 2.
Children by Presence and Type of Parents by Poverty Status: 2004

(Numbers in thousands)

Living arrangements of children	Children		Percent of children below poverty level	
	Number	Percent	Estimate	Margin of error[1]
Total	**73,227**	**100.0**	**17.7**	**0.6**
Living with married parents	48,787	66.6	10.0	0.6
Living with no parent	2,878	3.9	28.5	1.5
Living with an unmarried parent[2]	21,563	29.4	33.7	1.3
Living with unmarried mother and father	2,227	3.0	31.4	1.5
Living with unmarried mother only	16,973	23.2	36.5	1.4
Living with unmarried father only	2,363	3.2	16.6	1.5
Parent has an unmarried partner	3,857	5.3	31.8	3.2
Biological mother and father	1,814	2.5	32.4	4.6
Biological mother, step or adoptive father	324	0.4	26.9	10.4
Biological father, step or adoptive mother	87	0.1	28.7	20.4
Biological mother, partner	1,271	1.7	36.2	5.7
Biological father, partner	308	0.4	19.8	9.6
Step or adoptive parent, partner	51	0.1	(B)	(B)
Parent has no unmarried partner	17,705	24.2	34.2	1.5
Biological mother	15,303	20.9	36.6	1.6
Living with other adult relative[3]	3,197	4.4	23.9	3.2
Living with opposite sex adult nonrelative[4]	380	0.5	32.1	10.1
Biological father	1,972	2.7	15.8	3.5
Living with other adult relative[3]	375	0.5	15.5	7.9
Living with opposite sex adult nonrelative[4]	66	0.1	(B)	(B)
Stepparent or adoptive parent	429	0.6	31.9	9.5

B Base less than 75,000.

[1] This number, when added to or subtracted from the estimate, represents the 90-percent confidence interval around the estimate.
[2] Unmarried includes married spouse absent, widowed, divorced, separated, and never married.
[3] The category "other adult relative" does not include the child's siblings.
[4] Only includes adult nonrelatives who are not in the category "married spouse present."

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

lowest percentage (83 percent) living with both biological parents, of those living with two parents.

In 2004, 538,000 children lived with one adoptive parent and a nonadoptive parent (biological or step). Seventy-six percent of these children were living with their biological mother and an adoptive father; it is possible that many of these adoptive fathers were initially stepfathers.[11] Often, living arrangements of children are dichotomized by whether children live with one or two parents. Details in the SIPP data illustrate that even among children living with two parents, considerable variation exists in the combinations of parental types, whether biological, step, or adoptive parents.

Children Living With Unmarried Parents: Differences by Cohabitation Status, Poverty, and Race and Hispanic Origin

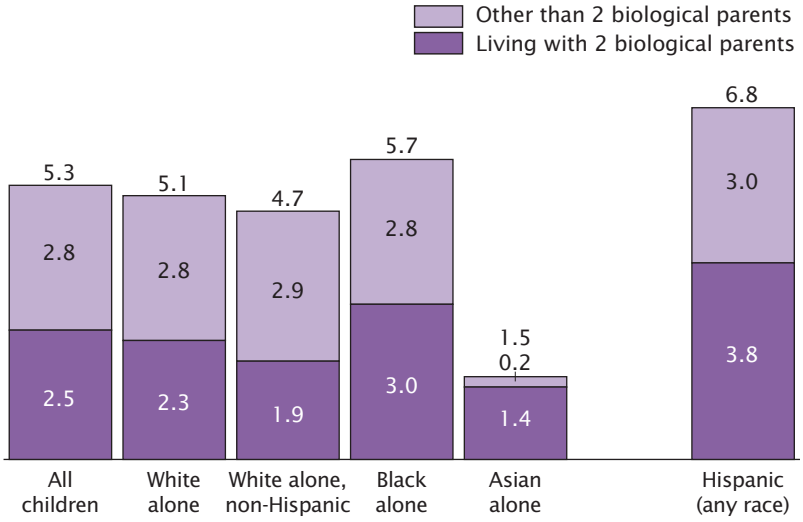
Numerous factors, including nonmarital childbearing, death, and divorce, affect whether children live with an unmarried parent for some portion of their childhood. Because this report is focused on living arrangements and because the data only show coresidential parents, "unmarried" parents include those who are married spouse absent, widowed, divorced, separated, or never married. Based on children's living arrangements in the 1990s, Heuveline, et al. estimated that about half of children under 16 might live in a single-parent household at some time before reaching age 16.[12]

Table 2 shows that in 2004, 21.6 million children (29 percent of all children) lived with one or two unmarried parents. Three percent (2.2 million) of all children lived with both their mother and father

[11] In 1992, 42 percent of all adoptions in the United States, whether public, private, or intercountry, were stepparent adoptions. See the following report for further details: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2004, *How many children were adopted in 2000 and 2001?* Washington, DC: Child Welfare Information Gateway. This report can be accessed at: <www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/s_adopted/index.cfm>.

[12] Heuveline, Patrick, Jeffrey M. Timberlake and Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr. "Shifting Childbearing to Single Mothers: Results from 17 Western Countries," *Population and Development Review,* Vol. 29,1, 2003, pp. 47–71.

Figure 2.
Percent of Children Living With a Cohabiting Parent: 2004



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

who were not married to each other.

Twenty-three percent of all children lived with their unmarried mother only (17.0 million), while 3 percent (2.4 million) lived with their unmarried father without their mother present.

The overall pattern of living arrangements of children with unmarried parents clearly indicates that women are the primary custodial parents of these children and that these children usually have unmarried mothers living without a partner present. Of the 18.7 million children living with their unmarried biological mothers, 3.4 million (18 percent) had mothers who were living with unmarried partners. In comparison, of the 4.2 million children living with their unmarried biological fathers, 2.2 million (53 percent) were living with fathers who were living with an unmarried partner, of whom 1.8 million were also the child's biological mother.

The percentage of children living below the poverty level varied by the number of parents with whom they lived. In 2004, 18 percent of children lived in families that were below the poverty level.[13] While one-tenth of children living with married parents were below the poverty level, this was the case for 29 percent of children living with no parents and 34 percent of those living with one or two unmarried parents. Among children living with two unmarried parents, 31 percent were living in poverty. Children living with their unmarried mother only were twice as likely to live in poverty (37 percent) as children living with their unmarried father only (17 percent).

While children living with unmarried parents are sometimes thought of as living with a parent who is the only adult in the household, many unmarried parents are cohabiting—either with the other biological parent of the child or with another partner. Figure 2 shows children by race and Hispanic origin. For each group, a stacked bar shows the overall percentage of children living with an unmarried cohabiting parent, divided into the proportion of children living with both biological parents and those who were not living with both biological parents.

Five percent of all children under 18 lived with a cohabiting parent. The percentage of all children who lived with a cohabiting parent ranged from 2 percent for Asian children to 7 percent for Hispanic children. Five percent of White non-Hispanic children and 6 percent of Black children lived with a cohabiting parent.[14] The proportion of children living with cohabiting parents who lived with both biological parents varied across race groups and Hispanics. Thirty-nine percent of White non-Hispanic children living with cohabiting parents lived with both biological parents (2 of 5 percent). About the same proportion of Black children (3 of 6 percent) and Hispanic children (4 of 7 percent) living with cohabiting parents were living with both biological parents. Among Asian children, most (1.4 of 1.5 percent) who lived with cohabiting parents lived with both their biological mother and father.

[13] The SIPP poverty estimate compares well with the 2005 Annual Social and Economic Supplement to the Current Populaton Survey estimate of 17.3 percent of children under 18 living in families who were below the poverty level, based on 2004 income; see <http://pubdb3.census.gov/macro/032005/pov/new02_100_01.htm>. The two estimates do not differ statistically from each other.

[14] The percentages of White non-Hispanic children and Hispanic children who lived with a cohabiting parent were not statistically different from the percentage of Black children who lived with a cohabiting parent.

Parents by Type of Relationship With Their Coresident Children

Table 3 shows estimates of the number of parents with coresident children in 2004 by type of relationship with their children. The data suggest that more fathers live in blended families that include children from their spouse's or partner's previous relationships. While 94 percent of the 37.8 million mothers with coresident children were living with biological children only, this was true for 85 percent of the 30.2 million fathers with coresident children. A higher percentage of fathers than mothers lived with both their biological and stepchildren and no other children (6 percent compared with 2 percent). The percentage of fathers who lived with their stepchildren only (4 percent) was also higher than that of mothers (1 percent). Fathers were more likely to live with any stepchildren (11 percent) or adopted children (4 percent) than were mothers, of whom 3 percent lived with any stepchildren and 2 percent lived with any adopted children. For both fathers and mothers, less than 1 percent living with children lived with foster children.

Table 3.
Parents With Specified Types of Coresident Children: 2004

(Numbers in thousands. Types of coresident children of any age for parents with at least one coresident child under 18)

Parent-child relationship	Number		Percent
	Estimate	Margin of error[1]	
Fathers	30,231	683	100.0
Biological children only	25,622	636	84.8
Stepchildren only	1,302	152	4.3
Adopted children only	553	99	1.8
Foster children only	76	37	0.3
Biological children and stepchildren only	1,910	183	6.3
Biological children and adopted children only	564	100	1.9
Other combinations	203	60	0.7
Any biological children	28,209	663	93.3
Any stepchildren	3,355	242	11.1
Any adopted children	1,257	149	4.2
Any foster children	156	53	0.5
Mothers	37,786	748	100.0
Biological children only	35,673	731	94.4
Stepchildren only	349	79	0.9
Adopted children only	457	90	1.2
Foster children only	71	36	0.2
Biological children and stepchildren only	751	115	2.0
Biological children and adopted children only	364	80	1.0
Other combinations	121	46	0.3
Any biological children	36,883	741	97.6
Any stepchildren	1,128	141	3.0
Any adopted children	861	123	2.3
Any foster children	173	55	0.5

[1] This number, when added to or subtracted from the estimate, represents the 90-percent confidence interval around the estimate.

Note: All of the parents in this table have at least one coresident child under 18. Some also have coresident children who are 18 and older, and the type of relationship between the parent and these older children is also reflected in the table.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

Children With Siblings

In addition to the number of parents with whom children live, another aspect of growing up is the presence of brothers and sisters (Table 4). About 21 percent of children (15.5 million) in 2004 were currently living with no other siblings in the household. Another 28.4 million children lived with only one sibling, while the remaining 29.3 million lived with two or more siblings.

Of the 57.7 million children living with siblings, 51.8 million lived only with full siblings (children who had the same biological mother and father). Twelve percent of all children lived with at least one half sibling, 2 percent with at least one stepsibling, and another 2 percent with at least one adopted sibling.[15] A larger proportion of children living with two parents had siblings (84 percent) than was the case for children living with their mother only (74 percent) or their father only (62 percent). Among the 2.9 million children living with no parents, 36 percent lived with siblings.

[15] The percentage of children who lived with at least one stepsibling does not differ statistically from the percentage of children who lived with at least one adopted sibling.

Adopted Children

The number of adopted children is difficult to estimate accurately. SIPP estimates rely on the relationships reported by the respondent—administrative records are not used. This collection method could miss some legalized adoptions and include informal adoptions where no legal adoption exists.

Because of the small number of adopted children and potential difficulties in counting them accurately

Table 4.
Children Living With Siblings by Type of Relationship and Presence of Parent: 2004

(Numbers in thousands)

Presence of siblings	Total			Two parents		Mother only		Father only		No parents	
	Number	Margin of error[1]	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Children	73,227	940	100.0	51,013	100.0	16,972	100.0	2,363	100.0	2,878	100.0
Living with at least one sibling	57,703	875	78.8	42,730	83.8	12,486	73.6	1,463	61.9	1,024	35.6
Living with only full siblings	51,799	844	70.7	38,701	75.9	10,809	63.7	1,392	58.9	897	31.2
Living with at least one stepsibling	1,263	149	1.7	927	1.8	225	1.3	75	3.2	37	1.3
Living with at least one adopted sibling	1,128	141	1.5	853	1.7	222	1.3	49	2.1	3	0.1
Living with at least one half sibling	8,587	383	11.7	6,142	12.0	2,273	13.4	45	1.9	127	4.4
Living with—											
No siblings	15,524	507	21.2	8,283	16.2	4,487	26.4	900	38.1	1,854	64.4
1 sibling	28,368	664	38.7	21,004	41.2	5,917	34.9	863	36.5	584	20.3
2 siblings	18,145	545	24.8	13,201	25.9	4,276	25.2	393	16.6	275	9.6
3 siblings	7,493	359	10.2	5,686	11.1	1,524	9.0	162	6.9	121	4.2
4 or more siblings	3,697	254	5.0	2,839	5.6	769	4.5	45	1.9	44	1.5

[1] This number, when added to or subtracted from the estimate, represents the 90-percent confidence interval around the estimate.

Note: Children are under 18. Their siblings may be any age.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

Table 5.
Adopted Children by Race and Hispanic Origin and Living Arrangements: 2004

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristics of children	Number		Percent
	Estimate	Margin of error[1]	
Adopted children	1,504	163	100.0
Race and Hispanic Origin			
White alone	1,034	135	68.8
Non-Hispanic	880	125	58.5
Black alone	244	66	16.2
Asian alone	79	37	5.2
Hispanic (any race)	187	58	12.4
Living Arrangements			
Two parents	1,206	146	80.2
Two adoptive parents	668	109	44.4
One adoptive and one biological	456	90	30.3
Other (one adoptive and one stepparent)	82	38	5.5
One parent	298	73	19.8
Mother only	259	68	17.2
Father only	39	26	2.6

[1] This number, when added to or subtracted from the estimate, represents the 90-percent confidence interval around the estimate.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

in the SIPP, only basic information is presented in Table 5. The number of adopted children rose from 1.1 million in 1991 to 1.5 million in 2004.[16] In 2004, 20 percent of adopted children lived with one parent, compared with 26 percent of all children. The majority (80 percent) of adopted children lived with two parents—44 percent lived with two adoptive parents, 30 percent lived with an adoptive parent and a biological parent, and 6 percent lived with an adoptive parent and a stepparent. Many children who live with one adoptive parent and one biological parent have been adopted by their stepparent.

[16] Stacy Furukawa, *The Diverse Living Arrangements of Children: Summer 1991*, Current Population Reports, P70-38, Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 1994.

Table 6.
Children Living in Blended Families by Composition of Family and Child's Race and Hispanic Origin: 2004

(Numbers in thousands)

Relationships in household	All races		White alone		Black alone	Asian alone	Hispanic (any race)
	Estimate	Margin of error[1]	Total	Non-Hispanic			
Children	**73,227**	**940**	**55,901**	**43,079**	**11,354**	**2,279**	**13,984**
Children living in a blended family[2]	12,157	452	9,251	7,029	2,077	103	2,431
Percent of all children	16.6	0.6	16.5	16.3	18.3	4.5	17.4
Type of Blended Family							
Number							
Stepparent only	2,530	211	2,066	1,730	291	24	384
Stepsibling only	265	69	205	103	53	–	108
Half sibling only	5,951	321	4,225	2,992	1,295	43	1,350
Stepparent and stepsibling	702	111	586	502	89	6	99
Stepparent and half sibling	2,049	190	1,676	1,299	255	19	388
Stepsibling and half sibling	41	27	21	13	11	3	8
Stepparent, stepsibling, and half sibling	251	67	171	130	57	7	46
One biological parent and one adoptive parent, and step, adopted, or half siblings	369	81	301	260	26	–	48
Percent	100.0	(X)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Stepparent only	20.8	1.6	22.3	24.6	14.0	(B)	15.8
Stepsibling only	2.2	0.6	2.2	1.5	2.6	(B)	4.4
Half sibling only	49.0	1.9	45.7	42.6	62.3	(B)	55.5
Stepparent and stepsibling	5.8	0.9	6.3	7.1	4.3	(B)	4.1
Stepparent and half sibling	16.9	1.4	18.1	18.5	12.3	(B)	16.0
Stepsibling and half sibling	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.5	(B)	0.3
Stepparent, stepsibling, and half sibling	2.1	0.5	1.8	1.8	2.7	(B)	1.9
One biological parent and one adoptive parent, and step, adopted, or half siblings	3.0	0.7	3.3	3.7	1.3	(B)	2.0

– Represents or rounds to zero.
X Not applicable.
B Base less than 75,000.

[1] This number, when added to or subtracted from the estimate, represents the 90-percent confidence interval around the estimate.
[2] Blended families are formed when remarriages occur or when children living in a household share only one or no biological parents. The presence of a stepparent, stepsibling, or half sibling designates a family as blended.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

Children in Blended Families

Blended families include those that contain stepchildren and their stepparents, half siblings, or stepsiblings. Overall, 17 percent (12.2 million) of all children lived in blended families (Table 6). In 2004, 8.6 million children lived with at least one half sibling (Table 4), representing 12 percent of all children and 71 percent of children in blended families.

Table 6 shows the proportion of children who were in blended families in 2004 by the child's race and Hispanic origin.[17] Five percent of Asian children lived in blended families, compared with 17 percent of all children and lower than any of the other race groups or Hispanics. Lower rates of births to unmarried women and divorce may contribute to lower rates of Asian children living in blended families.[18]

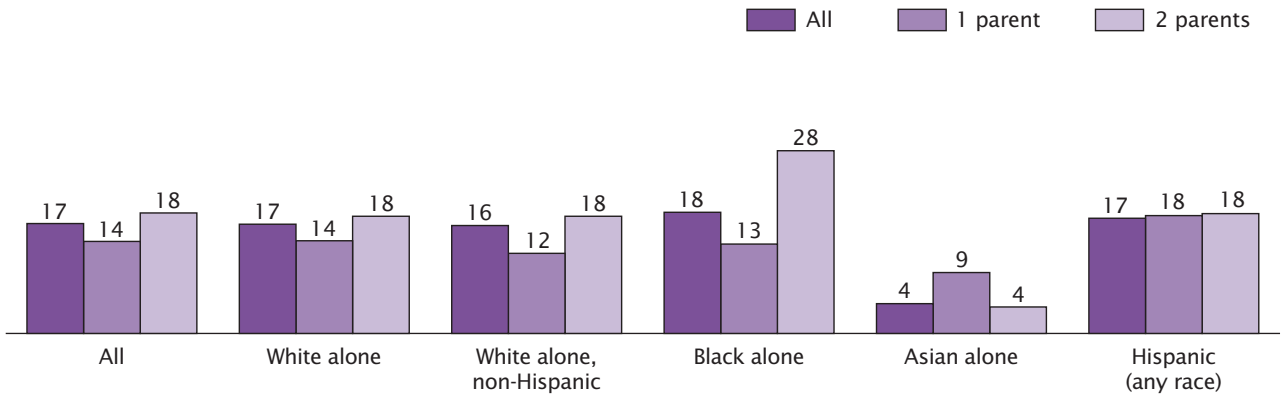
[17] Table 6 differs in several ways from Table 4 in the report *Living Arrangements of Children: 1996* that it updates. In 2001 and 2004, adopted siblings were not included with stepsiblings as they were in 1996 and 1991 but were coded separately. An additional category for children living with one biological and one adoptive parent and siblings who are the child's step, adopted, or half siblings is included. Many of these adopted children were first the stepchildren of their adoptive parent, and the adoption took place following the remarriage of the biological parent with whom they live.

[18] See the National Vital Statistics Reports for data on births and trends in childbearing among unmarried women, teenagers, and the general population. For example, see Table A in Brady E. Hamilton et al., *Births: Preliminary Data for 2004*, National Vital Statistics Reports: Vol. 54, No. 8, Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics, 2005.

For data on divorce by race, see Figure 5 in the following report: Kreider, Rose M. and Jason M. Fields. *Number, Timing and Duration of Marriages and Divorces: Fall 1996*. Current Population Reports, P70-80, Washington, DC, U.S. Census Bureau: 2001 .

Figure 3.

Percent of Children Living in Blended Families by Race and Hispanic Origin and Number of Parents: 2004



Note: The category for all children includes those living with no parents.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation , 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

After living with half siblings, living with a stepparent is the next-largest living arrangement that contributes to children living in a blended family—8 percent of all children and 46 percent of children in blended families lived with a stepparent. In blended families, stepparents were more commonly found living with White non-Hispanic children (52 percent) than with Black children or Hispanic children (33 percent and 38 percent, respectively). This is expected, since White women have been found to remarry more often than Black or Hispanic women.[19]

Figure 3 details the percentage of children living in blended families by race and number of parents. Overall, 17 percent of children lived in a blended family—14 percent of those living with one parent and 18 percent of those living with two parents were in blended families. Percentages are found to be higher for children living with two parents because of the higher potential for one of these parents to be a stepparent. Among children living with two parents, Black children had the highest percentage living in a blended family (28 percent), while Asian children had the lowest percentage (4 percent).

Children Living With Grandparents

Grandparents play an important role in providing care for children—they are the most frequently mentioned care providers for children under 5 among all types of relatives.[20] In 2004, 6.5 million children lived in households with at least one grandparent present (9 percent of all children, Table 7). Twelve percent of Hispanic children and 14 percent of Black children lived with a grandparent, while 6 percent of White non-Hispanic children lived with a grandparent.[21]

[19] Bramlett, Matthew and William Mosher. *Cohabitation, Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage in the United States*. Vital Health Statistics 23(22), Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics, 2002.

[20] Overturf Johnson, Julia. *Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: 2002*, Current Population Reports, P70-101, Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005, Table 1.

[21] The percentage of Asian children who lived with a grandparent (15 percent) was not statistically different from the percentage of Black or Hispanic children who lived with a grandparent.

Table 7.
Children Below the Poverty Level by Presence of Parents and Grandparents and by Race and Hispanic Origin: 2004

(Numbers in thousands)

Living arrangements	All races		White alone	White alone, non-Hispanic	Black alone	Asian alone	Hispanic (any race)
	Estimate	Margin of error[1]					
Children	**73,227**	**940**	**55,901**	**43,079**	**11,354**	**2,279**	**13,984**
Children living with at least one grandparent	6,471	334	4,108	2,592	1,590	301	1,643
Percent of all children	8.8	0.4	7.3	6.0	14.0	13.2	11.7
Presence of Parents							
Two parents	2,091	192	1,593	950	130	244	684
Grandparent is householder	825	121	614	407	85	56	229
Mother only	2,450	207	1,409	806	825	46	654
Grandparent is householder	1,925	184	1,126	662	641	27	503
Father only	331	77	268	233	25	–	43
Grandparent is householder	279	70	227	205	17	–	30
Neither parent	1,599	168	838	603	610	11	263
Grandparent is householder	1,563	166	819	587	597	11	260
Percent of Children Below Poverty Level							
All children	17.7	0.6	14.3	10.9	33.8	15.7	26.0
Two parents	10.9	0.6	10.1	7.4	17.5	14.6	20.1
Mother only	36.5	1.6	30.7	26.0	46.2	22.0	41.8
Father only	16.6	3.2	14.1	14.2	29.2	(B)	17.0
Neither parent	28.5	3.5	23.6	20.5	35.0	(B)	29.0
Children living with grandparents	22.0	2.2	18.4	16.4	30.3	22.6	22.0
Two parents	13.8	3.2	12.8	11.8	13.8	19.3	14.6
Mother only	23.0	3.6	19.1	15.6	28.5	(B)	24.6
Father only	16.3	8.6	16.4	18.9	(B)	–	(B)
Neither parent	32.5	4.9	28.5	23.7	36.9	(B)	38.0
Children living in grandparents' household	25.3	2.7	21.4	17.9	32.3	40.0	27.4
Two parents	17.1	5.5	16.1	14.0	15.3	(B)	18.8
Mother only	23.7	4.1	19.5	14.7	30.3	(B)	27.2
Father only	16.1	9.3	16.3	18.0	(B)	–	(B)
Neither parent	33.2	5.0	29.2	24.4	37.7	(B)	38.5
Children not living with grandparents	17.3	0.6	14.0	10.6	34.4	14.7	26.5
Two parents	10.8	0.6	9.9	7.2	17.6	13.9	20.5
Mother only	38.7	1.7	32.6	27.3	49.1	20.0	45.7
Father only	16.6	3.5	13.7	13.4	30.2	(B)	20.0
Neither parent	23.5	5.0	18.4	16.4	32.1	(B)	22.2

– Represents or rounds to zero.
B Base less than 75,000.

[1] This number, when added to or subtracted from the estimate, represents the 90-percent confidence interval around the estimate.

Souce: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

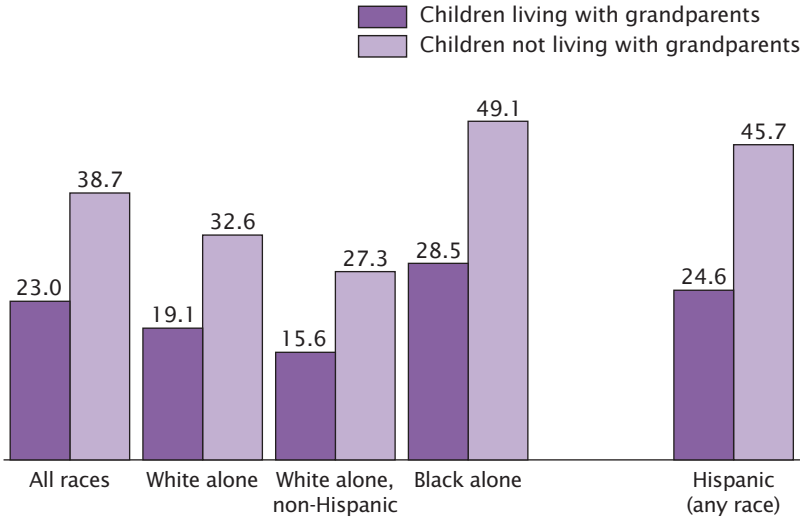
The arrangements when grandparents and grandchildren live in the same household vary. The child's parents are sometimes present and the household may be maintained either by the child's parents or grandparents. In 2004, 75 percent of children (4.9 million) living with a grandparent were also living with a parent in the household, and 62 percent of these children (3.0 million) were in a household where their grandparent was the householder.

This characteristic differs by the number of parents. Thirty-nine percent of children living with a grandparent and two parents were living in households maintained by the grandparent, while 79 percent of children living with a single mother and a grandparent were living in the grandparent's household. Among the 1.6 million children living in households with grandparents but no parents present, the grandparent was the householder 98 percent of the time.

Children living with grandparents more often lived in families in poverty than children living in households with no grandparents present (22 percent and 17 percent, respectively). The association between children's coresidence with their grandparent and the poverty level is not simple. A grandchild may live with a grandparent to alleviate financial hardship of a parent. Alternatively, the grandparent may move in with their child and grandchild if they need assistance.

Figure 4.

Percentage of Children Below the Poverty Level for Those Living With Mother Only by Presence of Grandparents and the Child's Race and Hispanic Origin: 2004



Note: These children do not have a father present in the household. Base less than 75,000 for Asian-alone children, so this group cannot be shown in this figure.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

Among children living with their grandparents, 14 percent of those living in households with two parents present were in poverty, not statistically different from the 16 percent of those living with their father only who were in poverty. Twenty-three percent were in poverty among those who lived only with their mother, and 33 percent of those who lived with their grandparents when neither parent was present were in poverty.[22]

[22] The percentage of children in poverty for those who lived with a grandparent and their mother did not differ statistically from the percentage of children in poverty for those who lived with a grandparent and their father.

Children living with neither parent were more often in poverty when they lived with a grandparent (33 percent) than when they did not (24 percent). Many states allow grandparents raising grandchildren to receive foster care or kinship care payments. However, some grandparents may be unable to supplement these payments with paid work if they are elderly or disabled. Others might be unaware of the availability of kinship care payments.

Children Living With Grandparents: Differences in Arrangements by Race and Hispanic Origin

Figure 4 illustrates that among children living with their mother but not their father, grandparents may offer economic resources to reduce the proportion of children living in poverty. Overall, 23 percent of children living with a single mother and a grandparent were in poverty compared with 39 percent for those not living with a grandparent. This pattern appears for all race groups and Hispanics.

Overall, 6 percent of White non-Hispanic children lived with one or more grandparents, less than that of Black, Asian, or Hispanic children. Variations in frequency of parents living in grandparent-grandchild households by the race of the child illustrate the different dynamics of extended household formation for different racial groups and Hispanics in the United States.

About half (52 percent) of Black children who lived with grandparents lived in households with single mothers and grandparents, a larger proportion than for any of the other groups shown in Figure 5. Another 38 percent of Black children who lived with grandparents had no parents living with them, the highest percentage for any of the groups in Figure 5. These children lived with their grandparents under conditions often characterized by births to unmarried mothers, marital disruption, and the absence of both parents from their daily living arrangements.[23]

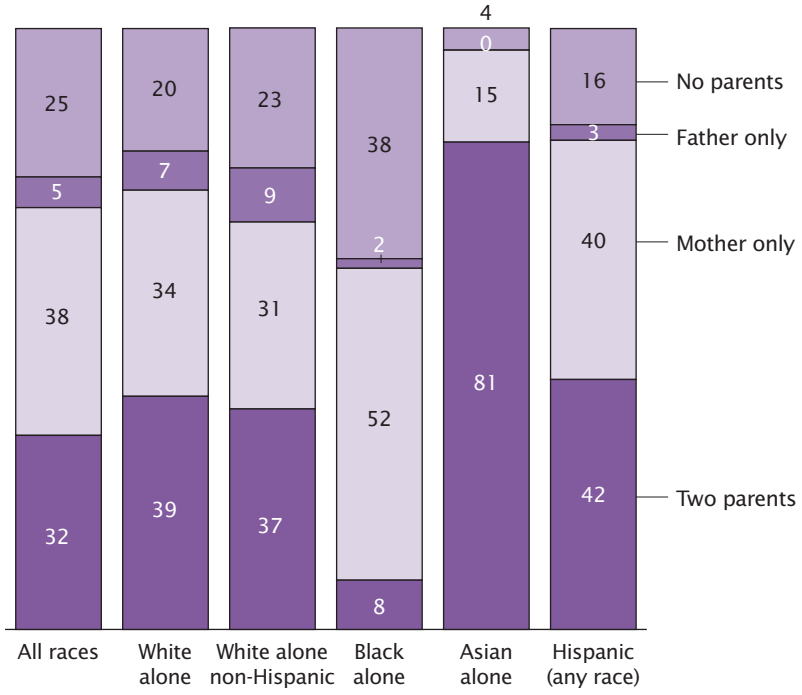
[23] See the following report, page 14 for a note about how marital status is determined when births to unmarried women are calculated: Brady E. Hamilton et al., *Births: Preliminary Data for 2004*, National Vital Statistics Reports: Vol. 54, No. 8, Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics, 2005. In most states, a question on the birth certificate asks "Mother married? (At birth, conception, or any time between) (Yes or no)."

In contrast, the majority (81 percent) of Asian children who lived with grandparents also lived with both parents. Another 15 percent of these children lived with their mother and their grandparents, while 4 percent lived with grandparents and no parent present. Twenty-three percent of Asian children in grandparent-grandchild households with two parents present were living in households where the grandparent was the householder (Table 7).

Thirty-seven percent of White non-Hispanic children living with their grandparents also lived with two parents and an additional 31 percent lived with grandparents and their mother (Figure 5).[24] Forty-three percent of the children living with two parents and grandparents lived in a household in which their grandparent was the householder.

Hispanic children were about as likely to live with both parents and a grandparent (42 percent) as they were to live with their mother only and a grandparent (40 percent). The grandparent was the householder for about one- third (33 percent) of Hispanic children who lived with two parents and grandparents.

Figure 5.
Percent Distribution of Children Living With Grandparents by Presence of Parents and Race and Hispanic Origin[1]: 2004
(Percent distribution)



[1] Hispanics may be any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

Relatives in Extended Families

Children may grow up living not only with their parents or grandparents but also with other relatives. When relatives other than the child's parents or siblings are living together, this type of family unit is called an extended family.

Table 8 presents data on the different types of relatives living with children. The estimates of specific relationship categories are not mutually exclusive. A child living with a grandmother, an uncle, and an aunt is counted separately in each of those categories.[25] The largest group of children living

[24] The percentage of White non-Hispanic children living with grandparents and two parents did not differ statistically from the percentage of White non-Hispanic children who lived with their grandparents and their mother.

[25] Among the three subcategories of grandparents in Table 8, however, a child is tabulated in only one of these categories.

Table 8.
Children Living With Relatives by Type of Relative, Presence of Parents, and Whether Below Poverty Level: 2004

(Numbers in thousands)

Living arrangements	Total		No parent present				Parent(s) present[1]			
					In poverty				In poverty	
	Estimate	Margin of error[2]	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	**73,227**	**940**	**2,878**	**100.0**	**820**	**28.5**	**70,349**	**100.0**	**12,157**	**17.3**
Presence of other relatives and nonrelatives[3]	13,446	474	2,741	95.2	780	28.5	10,705	15.2	2,493	23.3
Other relatives only	9,648	405	2,002	69.6	678	33.9	7,646	10.9	1,621	21.2
Other relatives and nonrelatives	779	117	181	6.3	55	30.4	598	0.9	127	21.2
Nonrelatives only	3,019	230	558	19.4	47	8.4	2,461	3.5	745	30.3
Specific Category of Relative[4]										
Living with—										
Grandparent(s)	6,472	334	1,598	55.5	519	32.5	4,873	6.9	907	18.6
Grandmother and grandfather	2,527	211	788	27.4	160	20.3	1,739	2.5	268	15.4
Grandmother only	3,371	243	751	26.1	338	45.0	2,621	3.7	533	20.3
Grandfather only	574	101	59	2.1	20	(B)	514	0.7	106	20.6
Uncle	2,327	202	287	10.0	90	31.4	2,040	2.9	520	25.5
Aunt	1,998	188	311	10.8	91	29.3	1,687	2.4	450	26.7
Nephew	517	96	64	2.2	35	(B)	453	0.6	156	34.4
Niece	494	94	68	2.4	30	(B)	426	0.6	170	39.9
Brother-in-law	121	46	28	1.0	14	(B)	94	0.1	13	13.8
Sister-in-law	87	39	27	0.9	11	(B)	61	0.1	15	(B)
Other relative	3,443	245	1,092	37.9	380	34.8	2,351	3.3	582	24.8

B Base less than 75,000.

[1] Parents include biological, step, and adoptive parents.
[2] This number, when added to or subtracted from the estimate, represents the 90-percent confidence interval around the estimate.
[3] The child's parents, siblings, and children are not included in other relatives.
[4] These categories are independent and not mutually exclusive. Relationship listed is to the child, (the child's grandmother, aunt, etc.).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

with another relative were living with a grandparent—6.5 million children were living with one or both grandparents. While 2.3 million children lived with their uncles, 2.0 million lived with their aunts. The category of other relatives includes more distant relatives. These responses did not contain enough cases to allow them to be shown with more specificity.

About 20 percent of children living in extended families (2.7 million) were not living with a parent. A higher percentage of children in extended families with no parents present were in poverty (29 percent) than those who lived with at least one parent (23 percent). Children who lived with no parents but with both their grandmother and grandfather were less likely to be in poverty than children who lived with no parents and their grandmother only (20 percent and 45 percent, respectively). The lower percentage of children in poverty when both grandparents were present may reflect the higher number of potential earners in these households.

Children Whose Coresident Parent's Marital Status Changed in the Last Year

Because the marital history of the child's coresident parents is collected in the SIPP, it is possible to estimate the number of children who lived with a parent who married, divorced, or was widowed in the last year. Table 9 shows that about 2.2 million children lived with a mother who experienced a marital event in the last year.[26] Of these children, 1.4 million lived with their mothers who married in the last year. For 794,000 of these children, their biological father and mother married each other and both were still living with the child at the time of the survey (Table 9).

Estimates of the number of children whose parents divorced during a year were previously tracked by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) as part of its vital statistics program. Currently, NCHS does not receive information from enough states to make these estimates. Previous NCHS data estimated that the number of children affected by divorce had grown since 1950. Divorce rates increased in the late 1970s and into the 1980s and subsequently leveled off in the late 1980s and into the 1990s.[27] An estimated 299,000 children were involved in the divorces finalized in 1950, or a rate of 6.3 per 1,000 children. This number increased to a little over 1 million children by 1972 (at a rate of 14.7 per 1,000 children), and stayed just over 1 million through 1984, when the rate was a bit higher, at 17.2 per 1,000 children.

Table 9 shows an estimated 1.1 million children were living with either their mother or father who divorced in the year prior to the SIPP interview in 2004, or a rate of 15 per 1,000 children. Seventy-four percent of these children lived with their mother (791,000).

Table 9.
Children Whose Coresident Parent's Marital Status Changed in the Last Year: 2004

(Numbers in thousands)

Marital event	Number		Percent
	Estimate	Margin of error[1]	
Children living with their mother[2]	67,986	921	100.0
Mother had marital event in last year[3]	2,214	197	3.3
Mother married in last year	1,438	159	2.1
First marriage	854	123	1.3
Married the child's biological father and still married	794	119	1.2
Average age of the child (in years)	3.2	(X)	(X)
Mother divorced in last year	791	118	1.2
Divorce from first marriage	637	106	0.9
Mother changed residence in last year	304	73	0.4
Mother widowed in last year	54	31	0.1
Children living with their father[2]	53,376	852	100.0
Father had marital event in last year[3]	1,629	169	3.1
Father married in last year	1,368	155	2.6
First marriage	826	121	1.5
Married the child's biological mother and still married	794	119	1.5
Average age of the child (in years)	3.2	(X)	(X)
Father divorced in last year	278	70	0.5
Divorce from first marriage	214	62	0.4
Father changed residence in last year	89	40	0.2
Father widowed in last year	31	23	0.1

X Not applicable.

[1] This number, when added to or subtracted from the estimate, represents the 90-percent confidence interval around the estimate.
[2] All of the children in the table live with at least one parent—biological, step, or adoptive.
[3] More than one marital event may have occurred in the last year, so individual event categories may add to more than the total.

Note: Sufficient data to measure incidence of separation are not available.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

Composition of Households With Children

While most of the tables in this report are shown from the child's point of view, Table 10 shows the living arrangements of children at the household level. In 2004, 40.0 million households included children under 18—95 percent had at least one child and his or her biological parent, 9 percent had at least one child and his or her stepparent, and 4 percent had at least one child and his or her adoptive parent. These categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, households can have children with

[26] The number of children experiencing their mother's or father's marriage in the last year is not exactly equal due to the fact that if the couple had separated by the time of the interview and the child is not currently living with both mother and father, they will not appear in both estimates.

[27] Kathryn A. London, *Children of Divorce*. Vital and Health Statistics. Series 21, No. 46. DHHS Pub. No. (PHS) 89-1924, Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics, 1989.

Joshua R. Goldstein, "The Leveling of Divorce in the United States," *Demography*, Vol. 36, 1999, pp. 409-414.

Table 10.
Composition of Households With Children: 2004

(Numbers in thousands)

Characteristic	Households with children under 18			Percent of households below the poverty level[2]	Percent of households receiving public assistance
	Number		Percent		
	Estimate	Margin of error[1]			
Households with children under 18	40,011	766	100.0	14.0	43.7
Households containing—					
Parent and child present[3]	38,777	756	96.9	13.8	42.8
No parent and child	1,234	148	3.1	22.9	72.2
Biological parent, biological child present	38,044	750	95.1	13.8	42.7
Stepparent, stepchild present	3,642	252	9.1	10.8	46.1
Adoptive parent, adopted child present	1,461	161	3.7	7.2	47.1
Foster parent, foster child present	208	61	0.5	12.0	83.7
Blended household (stepchild, stepparent, half sibling, or stepsibling present)[4]	4,661	285	11.6	10.7	48.7
Adoptive household (adoptive parent, adopted child, or adopted siblings present)[5]	1,656	171	4.1	7.3	46.1
Grandparent-grandchild households	3,316	241	8.3	15.5	70.0
Child, grandparent present, parent(s) present	2,958	228	7.4	14.4	68.7
Child, grandparent present, no parent(s) present	1,006	133	2.5	26.6	77.4
Extended households[6]	7,203	352	18.0	18.8	70.4
Other relatives only	5,125	298	12.8	17.6	70.6
Other relatives and nonrelatives	340	78	0.8	19.7	83.8
Nonrelatives only	1,738	175	4.3	22.2	67.2

[1] This number, when added to or subtracted from the estimate, represents the 90-percent confidence interval around the estimate.
[2] Based on the poverty status of the householder.
[3] Includes biological, step, adoptive, and foster parents of children under 18.
[4] These households include a stepparent and stepchild. The stepchild may be any age; however, at least one child under 18 is in the household.
[5] These households include an adoptive parent and adopted child. The adopted child may be any age; however, at least one child under 18 is in the household.
[6] Extended households include those that contain a child under 18 who has a relative who is not his or her parent or sibling or who has a nonrelative present.

Note: Except for "parent and child present" plus "no parent and child," percents may add to more than 100 percent since categories are not mutually exclusive.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, 2004 Panel, Wave 2.

both a biological parent and a stepparent. There were 4.7 million households with blended families and 1.7 million households with adoptive families.

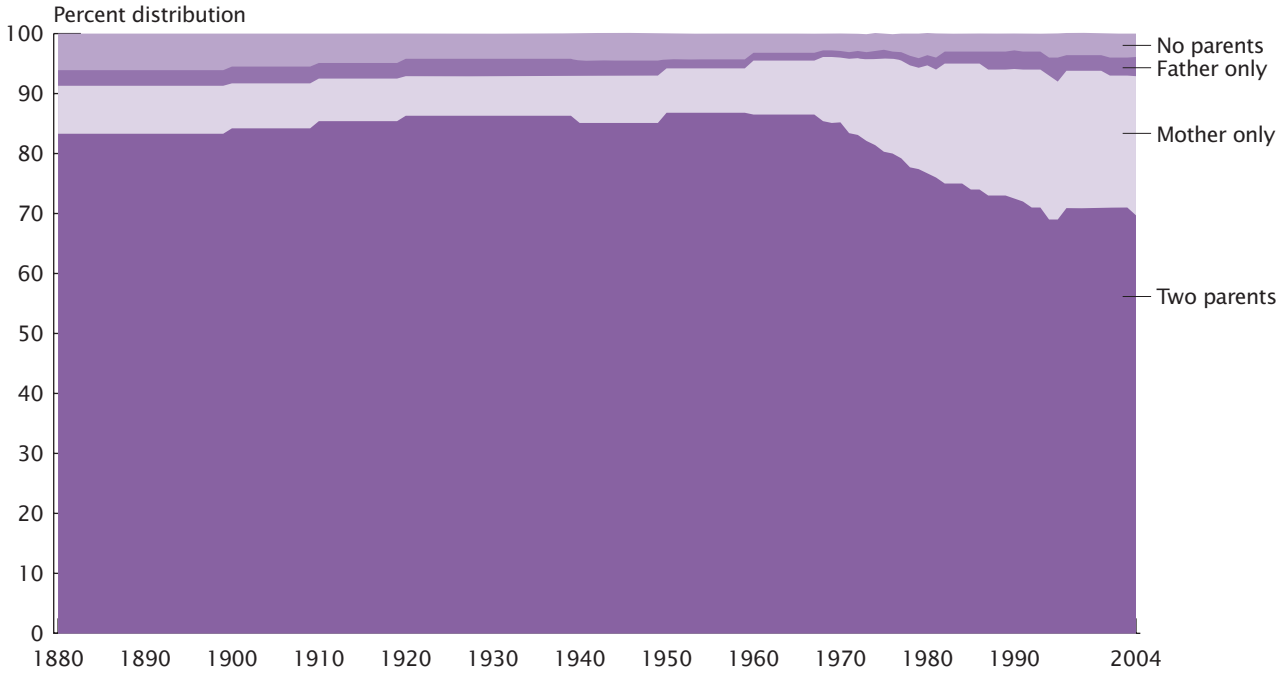
Eight percent of households with children under 18 (3.3 million) had grandparents and grandchildren present, with 89 percent of these composed of a child, his or her parent(s), and the child's grandparent(s). An additional 3 percent, or 1.0 million, included a child and his or her grandparent(s) but not the child's parent(s). About 1 in 5 households with children included nonrelatives or relatives of the child other than his or her parents or siblings.

While 14 percent of all households with a child under 18 were below the poverty level, the percentages for blended households and households containing a child and his or her stepparent were lower, at about 11 percent. This difference likely reflects the fact that stepfamilies are often formed by remarriage, so these households are more likely to have two parents and two earners than households with children and biological parents, which include single parents. Households in which children lived without a parent present had a poverty rate of 23 percent. Twenty-seven percent of households with children, their grandparent(s), and no parent(s) were below the poverty level.

Overall, 44 percent of households with children received some type of public assistance (Table 10).[28] A higher percentage of grandparent-grandchild households and

[28] Cash and noncash public assistance are included. Noncash benefits include food stamps; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children; Medicaid; rent for public housing; lower rent due to government subsidy; energy assistance; and free or reduced-price lunches or breakfasts.

Figure 6.
Historical Living Arrangements of Children: Selected Years, 1880 to 2004



Source: 1880–1960: Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 2.0 made available by the Historical Census Projects; 1968–1995: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey; 1996–2004: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation, Wave 2. For 1880–1940, children in group quarters are included (1 percent or less of all children).

extended households received public assistance (about 70 percent). Among extended households, 84 percent of those that included children living with other relatives and nonrelatives received public assistance.[29]

Historical Trends

Today's family and household structures may be placed in historical context by comparing them with family and household structures since the late nineteenth century. Based on decennial censuses for 1880 through 1960 using data from the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series, Current Population Survey data for 1968 through 1995, and SIPP data from the 1996, 2001, and 2004 panels, Figure 6 presents long-term trends in parent-child living arrangements.[30]

The data from 1880 to 1970 show that the distribution of children's living arrangements changed little. The proportion of children who lived without parents declined from 6 percent in 1880 to about 3 percent in 1970. During this same period, the proportion of children who lived with their mothers only increased from 8 percent to 11 percent. Between 83 percent and 85 percent of children lived with two parents during this entire period.

Major shifts in living arrangements occurred between 1970 and 1990, when the proportion of children living only with their mother doubled from 11 percent to 22 percent. Since 1990, the changes in children's living arrangements have leveled off.

Source of the Data

The population represented (the population universe) in the 2004 Survey of Income and Program Participation is the civilian noninstitutionalized population living in the United States. The SIPP is a longitudinal survey conducted at 4-month intervals. The data in this report were collected from June through

[29] The percentage of households including other relatives and nonrelatives that received public assistance does not differ statistically from the percentage of households including a grandparent and grandchild that received public assistance.

[30] Steven Ruggles and Matthew Sobek et al., *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 2.0*, Minneapolis: Historical Census Projects, University of Minnesota, 1997—<www.ipums.umn.edu>. See Internet Table 2 <www.census.gov/population/socdemo/child/p70-114/tab02.pdf> for additional years of data not included in Figure 4. For 1880–1940, children in group quarters are included (1 percent or less of all children).

September 2004 in the second wave (interview) of the 2004 SIPP. The data come primarily from the main survey and the household relationship topical module. The institutionalized population, which is excluded from population universe, is composed primarily of people in correctional institutions and nursing homes (91 percent of the 4.1 million institutionalized people in Census 2000).

Although the main focus of the SIPP is information on labor force participation, jobs, income, and participation in federal assistance programs, information on other topics is also collected in topical modules on a rotating basis.

Accuracy of the Data

Statistics from surveys are subject to sampling and nonsampling error. All comparisons presented in this report have taken sampling error into account and are significant at the 90-percent confidence level unless otherwise noted. This means the 90-percent confidence interval for the difference between the estimates being compared does not include zero. Nonsampling errors in surveys may be attributed to a variety of sources, such as how the survey was designed, how respondents interpret questions, how able and willing respondents are to provide correct answers, and how accurately the answers are coded and classified. To minimize these errors, the Census Bureau employs quality control procedures during all stages of the production process, including the design of surveys, the wording of questions, the review of the work of interviewers and coders, and the statistical review of reports.

The Survey of Income and Program Participation weighting procedure uses ratio estimation, whereby sample estimates are adjusted to independent estimates of the national population by age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. This weighting partially corrects for bias due to undercoverage, but biases may still be present when people who are missed by the survey differ from those interviewed in ways other than age, race, sex, and Hispanic origin. How this weighting procedure affects other variables in the survey is not precisely known. All of these considerations affect comparisons across different surveys or data sources.

For further information on the source of the data and accuracy of the estimates, including standard errors and confidence intervals, see <www.census.gov/sipp/sourceac/2004sanda.pdf > or contact Stephen Mack of the Census Bureau's Demographic Statistical Methods Division via e-mail at <stephen.p.mack@census.gov>.

Additional information on the SIPP can be found at the following Web sites: <www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/> (main SIPP Web site), <www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/workpapr/wp230.pdf>, (SIPP Quality Profile), and <www.sipp.census.gov/sipp/usrguide/sipp2001.pdf> (SIPP User's Guide).

More Information

A copy of this report along with detailed tables is available on the Census Bureau's Web site at <www.census.gov>. Children's data can be accessed by clicking on the "C" in the "Subjects A-Z" index, selecting "Children" and then "Living Arrangements of Children." The previous reports based on 2001 and 1996 data are also available at this site.

Contacts

For additional living arrangements or children's family information, you may contact the Fertility and Family Statistics Branch at 301-763-2416. You may also contact the author of this report by e-mail at <rose.kreider@census.gov>.

User Comments

The Census Bureau welcomes the comments and advice of users of its data and reports. If you have any suggestions or comments, please write to:

Chief, Household and Housing Economic Statistics Division
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, DC 20233

or send an e-mail inquiry to: <hhes@census.gov>.

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Appendix D: Trends in Intercountry Adoption: Analysis of Data from 20 Countries, 1998-2004

Peter Selman, November 2006, Journal of Population Research

Receiving Country	1980-89 Average	1988	1993-97 Average	1998	2001	2004
USA	7761	9120	10070	15774	19237	22884
France	1850	2441	3216	3777	3094	4079
Italy	1006	2078	2047	2233	1797	3398
Canada	109	232	1934	2222	1874	1955
Spain	19	93	784	1487	3428	5541
Sweden	1579	1074	906	928	1044	1109
Germany	189	875	836	922	798	506
Netherlands	1153	577	640	825	1122	1307
Norway	464	566	53	643	713	706
Denmark	582	523	10	624	631	528
Belgium	544	662	183	487	419	470
Switzerland	616	492	468	456	458	557
Australia	356	516	247	245	289	370
Finland	40	78	134	181	218	289
Total	16268	19327	22799	30804	35122	43704

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